

CHRISTMAS DREAMS.

BY EUGENE.

Now by his cot a troop of fairies glide,
Bright fairies neat and trim—



File up their gifts waist high on every side,
And, smiling, beckon him.
In dreams he wanders through a palace fair,
And Christmas trees bow low

sweet mouth eloquent with sorrow, and the dark hazel eyes dewy with recent tears. Raymond Kingsley almost crushed the small white hands he held and caused a cry of pain to escape the girl's pale lips. "Oh, my darling! forgive me; my great love has almost driven me beside myself." Then clasping her in his arms he continued: "God knows how I worship you, Lera; I can not give you up! My darling, I can not." His voice trembled with infinite tenderness and love, and he smoothed the dark waves of his darling's hair with a gentle, caressing touch. Lera Grantley was crying softly. She did not love him, but she could not bear to be the cause of his suffering. "Raymond," she said, sadly and sorrowfully, "Raymond, I am truly sorry you love me so much; I am not worthy of it, believe me."

will be your wife, Raymond, and, perhaps, some day I will love you as you deserve. The soft hazel eyes, with tears sparkling on their long, curved lashes, were lifted to the handsome, noble face that bent so tenderly over her. As for Raymond Kingsley, he folded her in his arms with a prayer of thankfulness on his lips as he kissed the sweet face he loved so fondly. She did not love him now, but she would love him when once she was his wife. He did not dream that she loved another. He was too honest and unsuspecting for that. All he wished was her love; that was the one bright dream of his life. And some day he felt sure that dream would be realized. A week later Archie Ashton came home, and was very soon informed of Lera's engagement to Raymond Kingsley. He would not credit such a report until he had heard it from her own lips. Then, and not till then, would he believe it. She was sure to be at the ball that evening, and he would see her there. The ball-room was brilliant with lights, and was one bright bower of fragrance and beauty. As Archie Ashton entered, the first person his eyes rested upon was Lera. Lera, leaning on the arm of Raymond Kingsley, looking as beautiful as a dream, in a dainty evening dress of exquisite texture, all light and fleecy, with bare white arms and shoulders. A picture of fair, innocent, girlish beauty was Lera Grantley, and so thought Archie Ashton.

Only for a second, then sudden strength came to her, and she wrenched herself away, and stood looking at him, with tears blinding her eyes. "I can not repeat what I have already said. It is too late." "Oh! think, darling, of my great love. Have you no love to give me, Lera? My life is in your hands, to make or mar. You have made a mistake; you do not love Raymond Kingsley. It is not too late, Lera. Be my wife. Do not refuse me." His voice—the voice she loved so well—was husky and shook with emotion. The bright, handsome face was full of love and tenderness; the dark eyes had lost their laughing light, and were filled with a pleading wistfulness. Ah, how her heart yearned toward him! The temptation was terrible. A week ago the knowledge that this man loved her would have made her the happiest woman in the world, and now it made her the most miserable. He loved her, and she must send him away. Her promise had been given to Raymond Kingsley, a true and honorable man, and she would keep that promise, no matter what the cost. Her voice was low and clear as she made reply: "I am Raymond Kingsley's promised wife, and again I tell you it is too late. Lera! Lera! pity me. You do love me—I feel sure of it." He never forgot the expression of unutterable misery on her face as she turned toward him.



"MERRY CHRISTMAS."



THE PICTURE ON WHICH HE HAD BEEN AT WORK.

Beneath a load of presents rich and rare—
You've had such dreams, I know.
How lightly rest the fingers of sweet sleep
Upon the eyes of you who dream.
When from each shadow cunning fairies peep,
And dreams are true as truth;
When all the world is given up to joy,
And each wide chimney hides
A Santa Claus for every anxious boy,
And every girl besides.

LERA.

A Christmas Story.

BY JEFFIE FORBUSH HANAFORD.
"Only a few more touches, and then it will be complete." The speaker, Raymond Kingsley, stood gazing with a tender light in his honest blue eyes at the picture before him. He was an amateur artist, with much power and genius, that only required study and necessity to give the world a truly great painter. Unfortunately for the world, he was not very energetic in his study. He was content to follow art simply as an amusement, and satisfied in being able to reproduce on canvas the form and features of the girl he loved, there his ambition ended. The picture, on which he had been hard at work since sunrise, represented a young girl, dressed in a picturesque toboogan costume; her small hands, encased in soft woolly mittens, held a pair of much-showered and at her feet was a toboggan on which were seated two boys, presumably her brothers. The snow lay thick and white upon the ground, and sparkled in the sunlight on the bare branches. The girl's face was full of tenderness and beauty. A soft knit cap sat jauntily upon her shapely head, and contrasted with its waves of dark brown hair, and her eyes, brilliant and loving, had truth beaming in every winsome glance. Raymond Kingsley drew a long breath as he gazed upon the sweet face in the picture. "Oh, Lera, my beautiful, bright-eyed darling, this is just as you looked the day my eyes first rested upon you. I loved you then, and I love you now, my darling, with all the strength of my manhood; and when this picture is completed I shall ask you to become my wife. For your dear sake, with your love to bless mine, I might some day make my name famous. Without it—oh! Lera, Lera, my darling, without your love I care not to live."

"Lera, dear one, I love you with all my heart and soul, and I would marry you tomorrow—yes, now, this moment, if I could." There was deep silence for an instant, then Lera said: "Supposing I should marry you, Raymond, and never love you. Could you, be happy then?" Raymond Kingsley drew in his breath with a sharp cry, then he answered: "My all-absorbing love for you, my Lera, must and will win your love in return. Only marry me, and I will be content to wait until my patient love shall reap its own reward." Raymond's face was deathly white as he awaited her reply. Poor Lera! how could she tell him that her love was given long ago to handsome, careless Archie Ashton, a man who had never asked her to love him. He had never hinted as to whether or not he loved her, it was true; but he had looked it, and always seemed happy when in her company. His eyes wore a tender, softened look in their clear, laughing depths that she never saw in them at any other time. Ah! she loved Archie better than any one else in the wide world. The sound of his voice was the sweetest music on earth to her, and one glance from his dark eyes, and the bright blushes into her cheeks, and the touch of his hand filled her with unspeakable happiness. Could she tell all this to Raymond Kingsley? tell him that if Archie Ashton had asked her to marry him she would have answered yes, but that he had not and never would? He was out of town, had been away for a fortnight, and only the day before he left she had seen him driving, and beside him, smiling into his face, was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. A bewitching blonde beauty, all velvet and seal-skin, bright eyes, and sunny golden hair. Her clear, silvery laughter mingled with the chime of the sleigh-bells as they glided by, so absorbed in themselves that poor Lera was unnoticed. With trembling hands she had pulled down her veil to hide her burning tears. Two ladies were walking directly ahead of her, laughing and talking loud enough for her to hear. "Archie Ashton's new lady-love! Beautiful, isn't she?" "What a flirt he is!" remarked her companion. "I really thought he had made up his mind to marry Lera Grantley; he has been quite devoted to her of late." "All that will end now," said the first speaker, "for he is engaged to be married to the lady with whom he is riding. She is visiting at his house. I received my information direct from a member of the family." Just then Lera reached her own gate and entered.

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MAMMA LIGHTS THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

"I am fortunate," said Archie Ashton. "One waltz remains unclaimed—No. 8, Permit me." And he placed his name opposite. Then, as Raymond Kingsley was seen approaching, he bowed low and left her. "She loves me!" he said to himself, as he made his way leisurely across the ball-room and took his station by a window where he could watch her unseen. "Yes! she loves me; else why that flush on her cheek? And the downcast eyes when I spoke to her? Now, that I am told another has won her, I find how dear she is to me. There must be a mistake; it can not be true! She does not love him. I shall win her yet!" Ah! that waltz, No. 8. To Lera it was more like a dream than reality. Archie Ashton had taken her around to a crowded ball-room twice without accident, or interruption, or what she dreaded still more, a whispered word. Then he suddenly paused and before she could realize where he was going, he had led her through the open door into the dimly lighted conservatory. It was almost deserted, fragrant with the heavy perfume of the flowers and delightfully cool. Archie Ashton sought the most remote corner from the light, where he found a seat for Lera, then clasped both of her hands in his. "Lera, I hear you are engaged to Raymond Kingsley. Is this true?" "Quite true," replied Lera. And in spite of herself her lips quivered pitiously as she continued: "And I am to congratulate you also, am I not, Mr. Ashton?" "Well! you are dreaming! I'm engaged to no one; I love you, my darling, and I—"

And Archie Ashton, who had been in the habit of doing, he sent a letter containing his farewell. It ran as follows: "Lera: My dearest, my love (for the last time I call you mine). I was in the conservatory last evening, Lera, and heard Archie Ashton tell you of his love. Then, and not till then, did I realize the awful possibility that you loved another. For my sake, darling, you were strong and true. And now, dear, for your sake, I will be generous, and give you back your freedom. I am going away, Lera, and you will soon forget me. Perhaps it is better so, I do not blame you; you could not help loving him. I only pray God he will make your life a happy one. I knew you did not love me, Lera, but I had hoped to win your love. I know now it can never be. God bless you, Lera, my darling, and farewell—forever. Raymond Kingsley." Before Lera had finished the first few lines, she hurried to her room, and locking the door, threw herself on the bed in a passion of sobs and tears. "Oh, Raymond, Raymond! it is you I love. I did not know it until now. I love you, and I have lost you." Springing to her feet, she paced up and down the room. What should she do? Perhaps, after all, it was not too late, if she could only see him; but no! A letter! Why not write a letter and send it to his house by one of her brothers? It was a good idea, and she acted upon it. The note was soon written, and calling her brother, she said: "Run, Bertie, and take this, as quickly as you can, to Raymond. Hurry, that's a dear boy." And Bertie did hurry. He ran all the way, as fast as his little fat legs would carry him through the snow, and he met Raymond Kingsley just as he was starting for the depot. When he looked up and saw Bertie Grantley flying down the street toward him, his first thought was that something had happened to Lera. He sprang forward to meet him, and his voice trembled as he said: "Bertie, in Heaven's name! what has happened? Tell me, quickly." But poor Bertie could not speak for the simple reason that he was all out of breath, so he handed Raymond the letter and began stamping the snow off his boots. "Only a few words, but they made Raymond Kingsley—the happiest man in the world. DEAREST RAYMOND: You were mistaken; it is you I love, and if you go away I shall—"

not blame you; you could not help loving him. I only pray God he will make your life a happy one. I knew you did not love me, Lera, but I had hoped to win your love. I know now it can never be. God bless you, Lera, my darling, and farewell—forever. Raymond Kingsley. Before Lera had finished the first few lines, she hurried to her room, and locking the door, threw herself on the bed in a passion of sobs and tears. "Oh, Raymond, Raymond! it is you I love. I did not know it until now. I love you, and I have lost you." Springing to her feet, she paced up and down the room. What should she do? Perhaps, after all, it was not too late, if she could only see him; but no! A letter! Why not write a letter and send it to his house by one of her brothers? It was a good idea, and she acted upon it. The note was soon written, and calling her brother, she said: "Run, Bertie, and take this, as quickly as you can, to Raymond. Hurry, that's a dear boy." And Bertie did hurry. He ran all the way, as fast as his little fat legs would carry him through the snow, and he met Raymond Kingsley just as he was starting for the depot. When he looked up and saw Bertie Grantley flying down the street toward him, his first thought was that something had happened to Lera. He sprang forward to meet him, and his voice trembled as he said: "Bertie, in Heaven's name! what has happened? Tell me, quickly." But poor Bertie could not speak for the simple reason that he was all out of breath, so he handed Raymond the letter and began stamping the snow off his boots. "Only a few words, but they made Raymond Kingsley—the happiest man in the world. DEAREST RAYMOND: You were mistaken; it is you I love, and if you go away I shall—"

"I will return with you, Bertie, my boy," he said. And he started with strides down the street, and Bertie trudging along by his side. Lera met them at the door, and throwing her arms around Raymond's neck, gave him, not only one, but a dozen kisses unasked, as she whispered: "How could I tell I should love thee to-day, Whom that day I held not dear? How could I know I should love thee away, When I did not love thee near?" "Mamma, when will you light the Christmas tree? We are so tired waiting." "Just as soon as papa comes, Ray." The voice is sweet, low, and strangely familiar. Yes, we are not mistaken. It is Lera. And as the door opens to admit the husband and father, we recognize Raymond Kingsley. It is Christmas eve, and the world without is wrapped in a misty shroud of snow, bright, sparkling and clear. Within all is happiness and love. Three beautiful children scamper across the bright carpet as their father enters, and the youngest, a bright little boy with his mother's dark eyes and a sweet laughing face, says: "Oh, papa, I want to see the Trismas tree." "So you shall, my boy; so you shall. Mamma must hurry and light it, before we grow tired waiting." "An' tan us see mamma light ve little candle on ve tree, papa!" exclaimed Ray, the eldest, in great excitement. Raymond Kingsley slipped his arm lovingly around his wife and kissed her ere he replied: "Yes, my darlings, we will all watch mamma while she lights the Christmas tree; and may we have many a happy Christmas together in the years to come."

WRITTEN BY A TEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL.

A sailor came home from the East Indies on the night before Christmas, and presented his sister with an owl and a talking parrot. The parrot had hung in the captain's cabin during the home voyage, which was the skipper's honeymoon, and had picked up stray bits of conversation. While the sailor and the family were eating their Christmas dinner, they were astonished at the manner in which the loquacious parrot handled English. "Let's kiss!" exclaimed the parrot. "Who!" hooted the owl. "Not you, you ogre-eyed tooter," replied Polly. After a few minutes Polly said: "To-who?" asked the owl. "Me, of course. Dash my grog! If you're hungry go to a Chinese laundry and eat. Rat-eaters don't keep Christmas." HE WAS INSIGNIFICANT. "Arabella," said Cholly Softop to Miss McFloppey, "did you ever notice that some people are amused with very little and insignificant things?" "Are they? Well, you must feel amused continually, then." "How so?" "Why, you are with yourself so much of the time."

THE EVE OF LOVE.

BY CHARLES RUENGE BANKS.

Deck the boughs so green and fragrant,
Let the waxen tapers flame,
Praise, ye men, from king to vagrant,
Sing sweet praises to His name!
Pile the blazing faggots higher,
Let the gaping chimneys roar,
String the harp and tune the lyre—
Angels tap at every door.
Soft the day of peace is breaking,
Greatest day of all the year,
And the Graces, care o'ertaking,
Flood the world with love and cheer.
Happy, bright-faced children gather
Round the smiling mother's knee;
From his chair the proud-eyed father
Looks on all complacently—
Looks on all and silent listens
To the voice of Memory dear.
In his eye the teardrop glistens,
And his heart, devoid of fear,
Pensive grows as he is sitting,
Sitting in the freight of gloom,
And the Christmas spirit are fitting,
Fitting, fitting to and fro.

"TANT I STAY WAKE?"

"Mamma, tant I stay 'wake to thee old Santa Claus?"



Perhaps via year, ven he tam rou!
Oo'd let me, if oo tood."
"My pet, he down and close your eyes—
He'll come when you're asleep;
And if no thought you watched for him,
You'd never get a peep."

THE BOARDER'S SOCK.

The star-boarder on Christmas hung up an old sock.
And the boardin'-house missis put in it a rock;
Then the serving-maid thought she would not be outdone,
So she stole to the sock and thrust in a bun.
Now, the boarder, awaking, dressed up in the night,
And expectant slipped slyly down stairs with a light;
Then he boldly walked in with the air of a lord,
And there pinned to his sock was a bill for his board.

HIS CHRISTMAS PRESENCE.



"Aren't you going to give me anything for Christmas, this year, Job?" asked young millionaire Aseel's wife. "I cannot afford it, my dear; the money market is so tight." "There isn't much difference between you and the money market in that respect. Shall you remain at home on Christmas?" "I don't know." "I trust you may. Your presence in the house will save me from having no presents at all."



WAITING FOR SANTA CLAUS.