

READING TIME FOR YOUNG FOLKS

CHRISTMAS GOLD

A Story of Christmas Magic



The Christmas Fairy had turned the web into sparkling gold.

ONCE upon a time it was the night before Christmas, and the woman of the house had cleaned everything from top to bottom, making ready for that fair day. There was not a fleck of dust in crack or cranny. There was no smudge of ashes on pot or pan. There was neither bat in the attic nor beetle in the storehouse nor mouse in the pantry.

At midnight the Christmas Fairy was coming to bless the house, and there was not a thing anywhere that the good woman could scrub or mop or chase away. Except one! In the farthest corner of the big room where stood the Christmas tree was a little spider, who had somehow escaped the good woman's broom and brush.

"How clean and fine the room is tonight!" said the little spider to himself. "I don't believe I have ever seen it quite so fine before."

Little did he know that he himself was the only thing amiss in all the house!

"How glad I am to be here tonight!" continued the little spider. For a long time he hid in his corner without moving. Deeper and deeper grew the stillness of the house.

"I must run about and see what I can see!" he exclaimed at last, and in a second he was stepping quickly over the floor on his long legs.

The first thing he saw was the Christmas tree, standing beautiful and green and fragrant in the center of the room.

"How lovely!" said the little spider, and in an instant he was halfway up the tree.

"How big it is!" he exclaimed, as he circled the great tree. "How wide its spreading branches! And how sweet its strange perfume! Its top points high toward heaven! And how beautiful is that great star!"

Over the tree the little spider ran, over every branch of it, missing not the tiniest tip of the tiniest twig on the tree. Then back to his corner he scurried, and was fast asleep in a minute. Alas and alack! When he had gone the big tree was covered from top to bottom with an ugly web of gray—a spider web.

It was midnight, and into the house came the Christmas Fairy on her rosy feet. Her hands were like white lilies and her hair was yellow as honey.

(Please turn to page 474.)

CHRISTMAS GOLD

(Continued from page 453)

Into every room she went, blessing the house with the Christmas blessing as she went on her way.

At last she came to the great room where the little spider slept in the corner and where the big Christmas tree stood covered with common cobwebs, a sorry sight to see.

She blessed the picture of Jesus and His mother Mary, and the little shrine where prayers were said, and all the spotless room. Last of all she blessed the Christmas tree, standing as a disgrace to all the household in its gray cobwebs.

In the morning it was Christmas. The sunbeams sparkled and the Christmas bells rang out clear and sweet.

In the great room in the good woman's house stood the Christmas tree, covered from top to bottom in shining gold. You see, the little spider had spun a web all over the Christmas tree, and the Christmas fairy had turned the web into sparkling gold.

It was Christmas magic, the magic of the Christmas blessing which turns everything into shining gold.—
Adapted from "The Instructor."

PUPPET THEATER

(Continued from page 471)

In some scenes the entire depth of the stage is used; in others only half, or even one-fourth. A forest scene consists, for example, of six pieces of scenery: a background, four wing pieces (two for each side), and an open foreground. (Figure 2) Two extra wings add to the possibilities.

For the Christmas story the background may show the interior of the stable, while a manger and animals may be among the figures. The outdoor scene may represent a starry night with shepherds and their sheep in the background. The scene of the wise men may represent a starry background with one large guiding star. The wise men mounted on camels are among the puppet figures.

On the back upright frame, on each side, a piece of zinc near the top is fastened and bent downward to hold the scene in place. (Figure 1) Most of our backgrounds are on stiff cardboard, but some are of paper, with only strips of cardboard pasted back of the two ends. By setting a lamp directly behind it, we can create moonlight or sunsets or early dawn.

The wings of the puppet theater are extremely important. To hold them in

BOYHOOD CHRISTMAS

(Continued from page 455)

5. Why was the narrator of this story lonely?

6. What was his "precious Christmas gift"?

7. Did you like this story? Why?

8. Could the events of this story occur in many different parts of the Philippines? (The author states that this is a true story.)

9. Does this story have "human interest"?

10. What have you learned from this story?

place, we use wooden slats in which there are round pegs at one end. These pegs are set in holes bored in the wooden floor of the stage. The advantage of this arrangement is that wings can be turned diagonally, giving better perspective, preventing the audience from peering in behind the scenes, and also making it possible to open stage doors and the like.

At the bottom and top of each slat are pieces of zinc, similar to those on the back upright frame, one bent upward, the other downward. These serve as clamps to hold the wings in place. (Figure 3) The wings make many things possible, like setting a house in the middle of the woods, or creating optical illusions.

(Please turn to page 477.)