

A NIGHT'S TRAGEDY.



HE is seeking Him now, so they tell me; All children she loves in His name, In some child still hoping to find Him, Though 'twas ages ago that He came."

Natalie sang this verse of the old Christmas song over and over again, as she sat one evening in the long gallery surrounded by her beloved dolls. This gallery led to her father's suite of rooms in the Hermitage, the addition the Empress Catherine had built to the winter palace, and the reason that Natalie's father lived so near the palace, under the same roof, indeed, was that he was private secretary to the empress. Natalie was a little Russian girl, and the verses she sang were for the benefit of her last new doll, who had lately come from Paris with a great many French airs and fashions. The dainty creature seemed so different from the other homely, clumsy dolls, that Natalie felt she must be constantly explaining or apologizing for something that might not be just what mademoiselle was accustomed to. In France, for instance, perhaps they had never heard of Baboushka, the old woman who personifies Santa Claus to Russian children. She wanders eternally over the earth, looking into every cradle, and is always doomed to be disappointed, because she refused long ago to show the Magi the way when they were journeying from Persia to Bethlehem through Russia. The song told also how Baboushka is dressed like an old, old woman, with a pack on her back full of gifts for good boys and girls, and how she always carries a broom, because she was sweeping when the Wise Men knocked at her door. Natalie became quite excited as she went on, for the Russian girls and boys think almost as highly of Baboushka as we do here of Santa Claus. Perhaps, though, they stand a little in awe of her, for besides the rewards she has for good children, I believe the bad ones sometimes tremble at the thought of the punishment she could bring to those who deserve it. It seems queer that Santa Claus should



"She made them all, large and small, act in their turn."

leave to Baboushka's care those countries through which he could so easily travel with his sled and reindeer; but, perhaps, that is the very reason he allows her to attend to his work there, for in a country like Russia, covered all winter with ice and snow, where a traveler can use a reindeer sledge whenever he likes, there is not half the novelty about that way of going around that there is here, where Santa Claus is the only one who ever tries it.

This beautiful palace, resplendent with white and gold decorations, was brilliantly illuminated every night, and the rooms in which Natalie's family lived were filled with bronzes, medallions and costly marbles. So Mademoiselle Parishkin, the new French doll, was very fortunate to have found so grand a residence. Indeed, she seemed more at her ease there than some of the older dolls, who never got over their awkward ways and appearance. Some of them had been brought from Lap-



"Why did you come to St. Petersburg?" land and the far-away provinces, and no doubt it was the way they were wrapped up from head to foot in fur and heavy cloth that made them seem so clumsy and unwieldy.

But Natalie loved them all as friends, and often they were her only audience as she repeated the fairy pantomimes and plays she had seen performed at the empress' private theater in the Hermitage. She made them all—large and small dolls—act in their turn, and they did very well in pantomime. Of course, in the dialogues and plays, she had to make all the speeches herself.

except when her cousin Sache, or Alexander, who was about her own age, joined in her play, and when he did, he made things go on very briskly. He thought the pantomimes rather slow, and preferred the evenings when they had illuminations in the gallery. These were imitations of the grand displays made at the winter palace when the emperor held his court there, and the anniversary of every important event was an excuse for a general illumination of the palace. On this particular evening, Sache came racing down the long gallery like the blustering north wind blowing over the steppes, calling to Natalie:

"Come on, I say, let us illuminate the gallery to-night!"

"What do we want to celebrate to-day?" asked Natalie.

"Oh, anything. I don't care what!" was the reply. "The taking of the bastille, if you like."

"Oh, no, Sache," returned Natalie.

"You surely remember that we had that anniversary only a short time ago, high as they designed, cut out and painted the transparencies that, with hundreds of little candles shining behind them, were to surprise her father on the evening of his birthday, when he should open the door of the long gallery leading to his library. But she did not remind Sache of the fact that the day before the birthday he told her that was the day the bastille was taken, and friends of liberty should not let the anniversary pass without a sign. She had let him try the effect of the illumination that night, and in his eagerness to make experiments, he had set fire to the decorations she had arranged on the white marble chimney piece. Sache remembered it, too, and was almost ashamed to remember how he had enjoyed the excitement of seeing those decorations burn more than he would a dozen pantomimes. He said nothing more about celebrating anniversaries, but suddenly turning, he saw Mademoiselle Parishkin leaning in every coquettish way against one of the long windows.

"Why, who is this you've got here?" he said.

"That's my new doll, Mademoiselle Parishkin. Isn't she imperial?"

"She looks as if she thought she might be the mother herself!" (So the Russians call their empress.) "She needs watching," continued Sache. "I and then, you know, you made a mistake about the date."

She remembered how her heart beat think you should let me train her; she might get you and herself into trouble. Do you know now, Natalie, I think she looks like a French spy!"

"Oh, no, indeed!" exclaimed Natalie. "I am sure she is not. Why, the Princess Laminski brought her to me from Paris."

"You would never know a spy even when you saw one," said Sache. "I'll tell you what we will do. We will try studying French history." "Of course, if she is not a spy that will end all the

St. Nicholas, as the patron saint of the children, now termed Santa Claus, was canonized, died, according to tradition, at Myra, Italy, and was then buried in the cathedral crypt. Six hundred years later his body was taken to Bari, and there, in the eleventh century the great priory of San Nicola was built. It is at that priory that on May 9 each year the festival of St. Nicholas is held with great rejoicings by pilgrims from all parts of the world.

Carving the Christmas Goose.

One must learn first of all, to carve neatly, without scattering crumbs or splashing gravy over the cloth or platter; also to cut straight, uniform slices. Be careful to divide the material in such a manner that each person may be served equally well. Lay each portion on the plate with the browned or best side up. An essential to easy carving is that the platter be large enough to hold not merely the fowl or joint while whole, but also the several portions as they are detached. The platter should be placed near the carver so he may easily reach any part of it. All skewers and strings should be removed before the dish is brought to the table.

Measure For Measure.

Gladys—What a horrid, rude thing that Mr. Flirtmash is! He stole six kisses while I was standing under a holly wreath and claimed he thought the holly was mischievous.

Edna—What did you do about it?

Gladys—Do? I did what any other self respecting girl would do under the circumstances—I made the horrid thing return every one of them.

Christmas Church Decorations In Italy.

More attention is paid to Christmas decoration of the churches in Italy perhaps than in any other country. On Christmas eve the young men and women assemble at the churches and spend hours in making them beautiful.

At midnight a mass is said, and after this a toothsome collation is served to the youthful workers and they are singing and playing upon musical instruments.

Tom to Sue and Sue to Tom.

"Can you guess, my sweetheart," queried Tom of Sue.

"Can you fathom by love's art what I'll buy for you?"

Pretty Susan bowed her head, made a pretty frown.

Then in accents sweet she said, opening eyes of brown:

"Why, certainly not. But I'm dying to have Christmas eve come so that I can find out. I know it will be something frightfully expensive—something that will cost lots more than you can afford. You men are so reckless with your money!"

Fool Tom next day ran in debt for a diamond pin.

And he hasn't paid up yet, for he's "shy" of tin."

And he says that if he ever asks Sue such a question again it will be after he has arranged in advance for a year's board in the nearest insane asylum.

By the way, Sue gave Tom a piece of neckwear that cost 75 cents.

It is very pleasant in there, only they

must stay there until I say they can come back. Hasn't she something else to put on instead of all this finery?"

"Oh! I do not intend to take off that beautiful dress as long as she lives," said Natalie.

"She is dressed too fine for a convict," said Sache, "and besides I think she is getting off too easy. Let us give her another choice. The knout or Siberia? Which do you choose, prisoner or the bar?"

"I want to know first where Siberia is," said Natalie. "Now I am myself speaking. I do not want her dress torn with any of your sticks."

French fashions ruled the world then just as they do now, and Mademoiselle's costume would have been a good model for a fashionable Russian lady's evening dress. It was in the days of crinoline and paniers, and over a skirt of white tulles she wore a lovely crimson satin polonaise with long ribbon streamers of the same shade, and stockings and slippers to match.

"Well, then, she will have to go to Siberia," said Sache, "and I will hang her by one of those red strings outside the schoolroom window, where she can see the Neva frozen over. That will be Siberia, and when she comes back she will be a different creature."

Natalie consented, but only because she feared something worse might be done to the unfortunate prisoner. She showed Sache which of the ribbon loops would be the safest to bear the doll's hair according to the laws of her own country in a court of justice, and see if she isn't a spy." (Alexander had been weight when he suspended her outside the window.

And there, in that perilous situation, poor Mademoiselle Parishkin passed the night—for they forgot all about her, and in the morning she fulfilled Alexander's prophecy of the night before. The snow and ice that fell during the night formed a thick coating all over her, and when she was carried to the large porcelain stove in the schoolroom to the programme boy, appeared suddenly before them in an almost breathless condition and exclaimed: "Mr. Freelance is back, the red dye in her satin polonaise, her slippers and hose, stained all over from head to foot, and she had indeed become a "different creature!"

A Christmas Menu.

Oyster Soup.

Chicken Pie. Roast Turkey. Cranberry Sauce.

Celeri. Cold Slaw.

Mashed Potatoes and Turnips.

Boiled Squash. Baked Sweet Potatoes.

Mince Pie. Pumpkin Pie.

Squash Pie.

Oranges. Cheese. Nuts. Raisins. Apples and Cider.

Christmas Changes.

The Yule log has given place to the steam radiator, the furnace register and the base burning heater, but we are warmed by any of these means on Christmas eve are quite as likely to enjoy Christmas as were our forefathers and foremothers, who used to celebrate their festivities when gathered about the old time fireplaces. There have been changes in heating apparatus, but human nature and Christmas remain as they were and will probably so remain after the present apparatus has been displaced by electric heaters. We grumble about our furnaces, our radiators and our stoves and will probably grumble about our electric heaters, but in Yule log times our ancestors were often roasted on one side and frozen on the other.

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AN EPISODE.

CHRISTMAS OF THE JOLLITY THEATER STOCK COMPANY.

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Three weeks before the holidays, and the outlook for a merry Christmas was a gloomy one, at least so far as the members of the stock company of the Jollity theater were concerned. Salary had come and gone, and as yet the ghost had shown no disposition to walk, and it was because of the nonappearance of that most welcome specter of stage-land that the rumor had started and was rapidly gaining ground that Messrs. Hustle and Hardup, proprietors and managers of the Jollity theater, were "in a hole again."

The piece which occupied the boards had proved a flat failure, and receipts at the box office had fallen in consequence to a plane never before reached in the history of the house. Moreover, no new play had as yet been put in rehearsal, and an atmosphere of unmistakable gloom and apprehension pervaded the region behind the footlights and weighed heavily on the spirits of every one there, from Pearl Livingstone, the talented emotional actress who played the leading female parts, down to little Kitty Sullivan, who was only 7 years old and was in the depths of despair because for fully three weeks she had been out of the bill. In short, every member of the company was in a condition of mingled uncertainty and curiosity in regard to the future of the playhouse and the projects of its managers, who as yet had given no sign of their intentions and had, in fact, been invisible to the members of their artistic staff ever since the last day on which salaries became due.

On this particular night, which happened to be one of storm and rain, two or three of the principal actors had gathered together for a serious talk about the situation, when Tom, the programme boy, appeared suddenly before them in an almost breathless condition and exclaimed: "Mr. Freelance is back, the red dye in her satin polonaise, her slippers and hose, stained all over from head to foot, and she had indeed become a "different creature!"

"Mr. Freelance!" cried Miss Livingstone, her face lighting up with joy, precisely as it does in her scene in the second act where her lover comes back from India, or rather as it did light up in that scene before the business became so bad. "Are you sure it was Mr. Freelance, Tom?"

"Sure!" rejoined Tom, with emphasis, "I seen him myself when he came in."

"Then, Tom, you be sure and see him when he comes out and tell him that I am particularly anxious to see him back here as soon as the curtain goes down on the second act. Here's a quarter for you, Tom, and you'd better keep it as a curiosity, for it's getting to be a very rare sort of bird in the Jollity theater preserves."

"Thank you, mum," said Tom as he pocketed the coin, with a grin.

"I fancy I see a gleam of light on the distant horizon," remarked the venerable Mr. Borders in a tone similar to that which he assumes in the great melodrama called "The Ocean Blue," in the scene in which he is discovered sitting on a raft in midocean on the lookout for a passing sail. "In the meantime," he added, "I think we had better wait and hear what Billy has to say before we take any further action in the matter."

Up to that moment they had taken no action whatever, but the phrase sounded well, and so Mr. Borders employed it.

Now, Mr. William Freelance, called by his intimates Billy, was and is today one of the best known figures in the theatrical affairs of the town, and, as every member of the stock company knew, he had on more than one previous occasion come to the rescue of his old friends, Messrs. Hustle and Hardup, and that, too, when they were in even more deplorable financial straits than they were at the present moment.

It was his reputation as a mascot fully as much as his remarkable talents which caused the whole avante scene to brighten up at the news of his presence in the theater, for playfolk are notoriously superstitious and have an unbounded and childlike faith in the efficacy of a mascot as well as in the destructive qualities of a "j Jonah."

Just as the curtain fell on the second act Mr. Freelance appeared behind the scenes and received the rapturous greetings of the company. Then Miss Livingstone took him by the arm, detached him from the little group which surrounded him, led him gently but firmly into her dressing room, placed him on her zinc trunk, and standing before him with folded arms said, "Billy, what's going to happen?"