The Christmas Fellowship of Miss Mab

ISANEL GUREUN CURTIS (Reprinted from Good Housekeaping by Permission)

Little Miss Mab sat staring into the Fradiant heart of a wood fire it lacked only two days of Christman Bhe had not yet invited anyone to share the hospitality of her small home. Never since she had been left mlone in the world and that occurred when she was 17-had she known a lonely Christman; there were always some forsaken creatures ready to turn gratefully to the shelter of her home All these festivities had brought a certain heart warmth and happiness which lingered for months, but it had not meant fellowship or sympathy.

"I believe I want a little bit of Christmas to myself this year," Miss Mah whispered to herelf; "it's sich hard work, all the fixin's! I do love to see the old women an' the starved boys an' girls fill themselves up. What they want, though, is the eatin' They don't know nothin' about fellowship When a woman steps over the 40 line an' has been alone all her life, there's a sort of longin' for fellowship-sin't there, Maltie?"

The gray car arched his back and rubbed his plump body against Miss Mab's dress.

"It's a fine dinner," observed Miss. Mab in her solltary musing: "it's a fine enough dinner to deserve fellowship" She rose and walked to the front window. "I might jest as well out with what is on my mfad," she said "I know who I want to invite as well as can be; all that's troubling me is the propriety of it. Now if the fittle thing hedn't a father, I'd take her in and keep her-longerin Christ-

She was watching six-year-old Enas. 100." girl who lived in the big boarding Thouse across the street which was "thronged and lonesome" as Miss Mab expressed it. Every afternoon about "five the child lingered on the steps and watched eagerly till a man turned the corner-a tall, round-shouldered thin, sickly-looking man. As soon as she caught sight of him she darred like a swallow down the street and

always slung his lunch box on his endst, and lifted her "to his breast They did not seem to talk. The head with its brown curls was laid contentedly on his shoulder and occasionally the father bent to rub his cheek against the child's pale face. He climbed the steps with the little girl in his aims and shut the door behind him.

"It's fellowship inside there" she whispered; then she sat down to her fonely little tea table.

At seven o'clock she put' Maltfe to his bed down collar; afterward she dressed and started for prayer mesting. Two or three friends stopped to speak to her. They decided she was in an absent mood for she did not seem to know what they were talking about Miss Mab had only one thought in her mind, and it seemed to rhyme with the hymn, it mingled with the short discourse and prayer. It had only one stenor: she was longing to have the minister settle a monotonous question for her It seemed as if all the congregation lingered to talk with him after prayer meeting. That night once for twice he held out a welcoming band, but she evaded it; she could not seek his advice until she was alone At last everybody was gone but herself. The young clergyman came forward genially

"I wanted to speak to you just a minute, Mr Pierce I live alone, you known an' I want to give some other folks who are kind of lonesome a bit of Christmas comfort an' fellowehip an' a good dinner "

"I know nothing more belitting the spirit of Christmas" said the clargeman, cordially; "it is following the very teachings of our Master"

"I'd like to tell you, though, who it is." said Miss Mab, eagerly: "it's a lit-He girl who lives across the street in a great, noisy, desolate boarding house. She'd have to bring her father. for he's all she has. They seem to be terrible devoted to each other I recken he's a widower-though I don': know. I've never spoken a word to either of 'em. I thought you'd tell me whether 'twould be proper or not"

"There can be no question of the propriety. Miss Mab," he said earnestly "In your kindness of heart you could make no mistake Miss Mab took bis proffered hand

warmly "Thank you," she said; "thank you so much!"

Next day she watched for the little giri who did not appear #11 about halfpast four, and then she came out to hon nimbly up and down the flight of stone steps. Miss Mah, throw a shawl ever her head and or resed the snown street. She had a gracious way with rhildren which readily reached their Bear's. The shyness of the child disappeared while Miss title delivered a emeracus irritation You'll rememher" she said gently. "what I want you to do lest whister to your father when he pilks you an eye street corner that a tonels oil w men who lives across the street wishes a Bit of Christman fellowship an if you and he haven't anything else planed whe invites you to come and done with her to-morrow. I'll watch for you co come back, an if you wave your hand I'll know you'll come. You can re-

member " "I'll remember," answered the little girl She spoke gravely, but there was an eager light in her eyes "I'm sure we'll come. Papa and me was talk. ing about Christmas last night and wishing we were back in the country. because there were homes there where

we would have been invited. We don't know anybody here yet, except boarding house folks. I've wanted so to get a quainted with your kitty, but I didn't dara come over."

"You dear little soul!" said - Miss Mah, warmly; "you shan't have any more lonesome days, if I can help it." Miss Mab watched anxiously the meeting at the corner. The child did not nestle her head on her father's shoulder, as was her custom; she was talking to him easerly and pointing across the street to the little brick house set in the midst of a wide garden. She did not wave her answer Miss Mah's heart began to beat tumultuously, when she saw the tall man come striding across the street through the snow. She threw the door open before he knocked. He howed courts-

"My little girl has told me of your goodness," he said "It is kind of you, very, very kind. I do not know how to thank you. We shall be very happy to come. I do not mind the loneliness much for myself, but for Cynthia, left alone all day in our bare little room, the thought of it stays with me constantly while I work." Cynthia hung delightedly over her father's shoulder whispering in blissful friendliness to the gray cat...

"Twas a bold thing to do, invitin' strangers this way," said Miss Mab. applicationally. The scarlet blacker wore chasing each other across her cheerful face "I didn't say anything about the little girl's mother, because I d' 'n't just know-" She stopped hes-

"Cynthia's mother died when she was three days old," said the man, slowly; "she has had to grow up with hardly anybody to care for her but her father He isn't quite as good as a mother would be, is he, dearest?" "He's pretty nearly as good," while-

pered the child, stroking the careworn "Land sake!" eried Miss Mab, with a strange, choking sob; "land sake, it is hard lines when the father has to do the motherin', too!"

"We are very happy together aren't we. Cynthia?" The child nodded emphatically.

"The "worst is her loneliness, only she will be going to school pretty soon; and our Christmas is assured. I cannot thank you cordially enough. madam, both for Cynthia and myself We will be delighted to come" The child waved a good-night as they crossed the street, and Miss Mab wiper her eyes furfixely when she sat down in her big moking chair. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," she said to herself; "somehow, it seems to bring such warm comfort into your own life."5,

After the dinner had been cleared away Miss Mab sunned herself in the icrous warmth of fellowship. The gralous wood fire wrapped the little group n its friendly glow and the very spirit of Christmas seemed to hallow the nomely, cozy living room.

It was a wild cold winter, with great mow storms whirling over the country and city streets blocked with huge irifts but there were no more lonely lays for Cynthia. The room in the desoate boarding house was almost deserted netween morning and night. The radiance of gracious friendliness and pliasful warmth constantly awaited the shild in the house across the street ... Maltie's welcome was as cordial as that of his mistress. Every morning, after se had eaten his comfortable breakfast. he jumped in the living room window to ourl himself up in a gray ball with expectant half shut eyes fixed on the brick building across the street. He watched Ill the door was opened by a tall man, who carried a lunch box and a little dinging bundle wrapped in a fleery prown shaw! He always chose the same path; he came striding across the street o the red brick house set in the wide vard. Then Maltie with a sudden eager. leap went to find his mistress, and folowed her, purring loudly to the front loor. He could scarcely wait for the little visitor to be unwrapped. Miss Mab's hunger for fellowship was no less ardent than that of the gray cat. Then what days followed. It seemed like a sudden burst of sunshine come into

Cynthia's lonely life. The careworn look seemed to be fading from her father's face. When evening came and he stopped at Miss Mab's door to gather the little girl back in his arms, there was time for a few moments' cheerful conversation. Cynthia's farewells were always tempered by the acsurance of her return in the morning

One night the child, tucked in a blanket, laid her cheek against her father's, when their bedtime talk was nearly finished. She whispered: "Don't you love Miss Mab, father?" "I do," he

said in a low voice. "She's just as good as a fairy godmother, isn't she?", questioned the child; "almost as good as the godmother. who rame to take care of the poor little

pink princess" "Twice as good," laughed the father "I couldn't have ber for a really truly own godmother, could 17" she asked

anxiously "It would be very time" "And then she makes such good things to eat. I could have a ginzer-

bread man for tea every right. -And what could we offer for all of that the home and the goodness and --"Who we could love her" said the thild. Tyou and I could love her with all our hearts, that would make her very

TAPPA " Woold it really?" "I know it would. Won't you ask her if we can some? Cynthia pleaded

Or y we have so little to offer " said "Loving people isn't little, is it?" in-

defect the child "No. The man's eyes were fixed on the cheerful red glow in the window of Miss Mable living room. "No dearest someobdy has said that love in the

greatest thing in the world "- 2 1

A CHRISTMAS BARGAIN

"July is my chief auxiety," wrote Judy's mother, Mrs. PhoebesPothmabee, to her sister, Miss Jane Pringle. "Just as soon as we knew that the bank in which we had deposited our little all had failed Ethel went to work in the straw factory and Hetty is learning dressmaking, I am sorry to say that Judy is still a little flighty-very fond of pretty clothes, and not so sensible 34 the others. Judy must help, but I don't know what she can do."

"Judy! Fudge! I suppose she means Busan Jane," said Miss Pringle to herself "Well, I can't have her here, and that settles it "

Nevertheless, this is the letter that made its way by the next day's mail to the amali gray house, under the shadow of a great bald-pate mountain, where

poverty had flown in at the door: "Dear Sister Phoebe: I have been thinking that it would be handy to have a spry young girl to help me in the store. But she must be sensible and have good judgment, besides being epry, because I may want to send her to the city to buy goods. If you think your youngest. Susan Jane, can learn to do as I want her to, send her along "

"Sense and good judgment! Why, Judy won't do!" exclaimed Herry, with sisterly frankness, when she read the letter. This seemed the general opinion of the family, but nevertheless it was decided that Judy should go.

"They don't think I am good for anything," said Judy to herself. "But they shall see."

She looked back through the blinding tears at the little gray house. There were handkerchiefs waved from it as long as the stage was in sight. Hosy, the only boy, who mag lame, waved his cap on the end of his crutch.

"You're not pretty, and that looks as if you might have some sense," said Aunt Jane, by way of greeting. But the parrot was polite and entertaining. and the little dry goods shop fascinating, and Poppleton's main street was gay Slowly, but surely, Judy's spirits F060

Of course the new assistant made some mistakes. But she rearranged the shop windows to the great satisfaction of her aunt, who was inwardly conscious that she herself was not "tasty." and lacked an eye for color. And she advanced several new ideas which Miss Pringle instantly recognized as improvements.

Christmas was coming-an anxious dime in shopkeeping-and Aunt Jane was educating her niece up to a great undertaking. She had long dreaded the necessary trip to the city for goods, on account of the faintness that was apt to come upon her when she was in crowds, and now she was beginning to think that she might trust Judy to go in her stead.

Judy's taste could certainly be trusted and she was self-rellant and a ready reckoner. With a definite and exact. list of the arricles wanted, Miss Pringle decided that her niece could go to the city and buy the Christmas goods.

"There are always Christmas novelties and attractive bargains," she said "I am going to give you \$20 extra and leave the purchases to your discretion " What would they say at home? Judy felt several inches taller as she walked to the station

The list first lit was long and uninteresting. Experience had taught Aunt Jane just what kinds of fancy soaps and candy baskets would sell best and those articles were all set down in rioid: datail

But while she was making these unexciting purchases, Judy's heart and eyes were all the time wandering .in search of the fascinating Christmas novelty, by which she meant to convince Aunt Jane of her business talent.

It was when she was buying a piece of red cashmere that she caught sight of a brilliant parasol. A salesman removed it from its casing and suppended it conspicuously above the counter, it was of red allk, with elaborate flouncings of chiffon like loyeliest goszamer. Judy gazed upon it in breathless admi-

Another parasol was suspended beside the first; this was of palest blue with white floundings. There was one all of chiffon-"old rose," the clerk falled the color (it was unknown to Crow Hiff). Its handle was of twisted wood that gave out a faint, delicious perfume

"Seiling at retail for a song. Don't want to keep them over because while is going to be the rage next year," ex plained the clerk to some one who remarked that it was unusual to see parasols at Christmas "Six and seven dolfar parasols-all for a dollar and a half"

Judy tried to be practical - not to let her eatheric sense run away with her "business bump". She knew her weak. ness for a parasol and a fan; they had laughed about it at home. But other people liked beautiful parasols. They would add the touch of color and grace that it was always impossible to obtain with Miss Pringle's sternly useful commodifies. She believed, too, that they would stand her aunt's crucial test of values that they would sell!

A crowd of women was collecting round the parasols, which the clerk was still hanging up

of will take 13," said Judy, firmly, and her heart bear like a trip hammer. The grow i gazed at her, even the clerk looked asconished

"Parasola! Thirteen parasols in the dead of winter! Susan Jane Follanabee, are you crazy?" cried Aunt Jane, shrilly. "I couldn't sell a parasot anyway upless it was a good, stout black

But Judy felt that even the little upbraidings were not so hard to bear as the gloomy ellence that ensued when Aunt Jane tied an old green barege veil found her head and ia) despairingly lown upon the lounge with her smellor saits

She took heart of grace, however, for the silli believed a little lu her bargain, and begged her aunt to let her display one of the parasols—only one—in the shop window. Aunt Jane said she should expect to be sent to the insanaasylum, having a parasol in her shop window in December, but she was so liscouraged that she did not care.

The parasol had been in the window only an hour or two when Aunt Jane was thrown into a flutter by the sight of a very stylish young woman cross-DR the street

"It's Miss Betty Armstrong!" she delared. "I heard the family had come, with a lot of visitors, to spend the holllays. That great house on the hill is where they spend their summers. I'll eave you to wait on her, because I ain't dressed up." Aunt Jane hurried nto the back room, but she left the Juor alar

"I want to look at that parasol-it's such a lovely shade!" said Miss Betty Armstrong, who had come rustling in. accompanied by a tall young man. "And what a delightful handle!" she added, as Judy passed it across the counter. Itidy was glad Aunt Jane had left the loor ajar.

"We ought to have decorations like his for the girls to carry in the minstrel show," said Miss Betty. It's too pad we didn't think of it."

"I-I have a few more." The color rushed to Judy's temples and her heart thumped as she drew from the packing case under the counter, one after another, the parasols she had thought she would never care to look at again.

"They'd be lovely for favors, Alf!" murmured Betty, admiringly "And to give the girls who take part in the tab-"Seven dollars-wh-e-w!" The young man had seen the price marked on the

'old rose" parasol. "Discount for the ot, I suppose"" he added to Judy. Judy made figures on a piece of paper knitting her brows; she was trying to calculate how much profit her conscience would allow her to take Aunt Jane, so carried away by excitement as to peep through a crack, regarded her hesitation as business diplo-

brow, divided between her desire to justify her "business bump" in Aust



SHE DREW OUT THE PARASULS

Jane's eyes, and her determination to do what was known at Crow Hill as "the square thing."

"They were bought at a bargain," she said at last, in a faint, but firm, voice. "I can sell you the whole for

The hargain was very soon concluded, and then Miss Betty was suddenly seized with curlosity. "It doesn't seem like Miss Pringle to keep parasois," she said, looking around

Judy told her customer that she had purchased them, and being drawn outof herself perhaps by the excitement of good fortune, told her how she wanted to help them all at home. Miss Betty was very kind and sympathetic, and before she went away asked July to come to her house to the minstrel show on Chris mas night, and bring her aunt.

"They never asked me before, though they've asked lots of Poppleton filks," said Aunt Jane, a little resentfully. That was after she had collapsed upon the lounge again, this time for pure delight and without the veil.

They went to the entertainment and had a delightful time. Miss Betty sought Judy in an interval between the performances. She said she had been thinking of what Judy had told her about wanting to be good for something, and make happier times at home, and she thought she knew of something that would be profitable, and would not interfere with the shopkeeping. Her father was a manufacturer of toys, and from his establishment work was given out; work that required only taste and a little knack at sewing-the covering of the dolls' parasols and canoples for dolls' carriages and the dressing of dolls.

It was profitable work, and if Judy would like to try, Miss Betty thought she could manage to get her the oppor-

If she would like it! Judy swallowed what seemed to be a whole buckerful of tears and let one roll off her nose to answer, and Miss Betty perfectly understood

It was not long before a packingcase traveled regularly between Miss Pringle's store and Mr. Armstrong's area: manufactory, and Judy did work that the loved, that brought her as much money as all Aunt Jane's shop-

It was not much longer before a case of dolls' straw hats traveled regularly from Ethel's hands to the same manufactory, and Ethel's toil was lighter and her gains heavier in consequence. Judy has dreams of a firm in which Ethel and Hetty and she will be partners, and Hosy-who is at present under a great surgeon's care---will be the general manager and bookkeeper --Youth's Companion.

Mrs. Whittler's Strategy

ONT you think, dear, that it would be nice to spend our Christmas in Florida?"

Mr. and Mrs Whittler were sitting in their coxy back parlor. As she spoke Mrs. Whittier turned to her husband with an auxious look of interrogation.

"Never," exclaimed Whittler. "Why, we couldn't afford it. What an idea! I couldn't dream of such a thing. Florida! I should say not!" "I merely mentioned the matter,"

said Mrs. Whittler, seeing her error. "It is of no special consequence" At the same time she eyed radly a package of time tables and steamboat circulars that for the past week she

had been surreptitionally collecting. To go to Florida had been the dream of months. And now it was ruthlessly shattered. Still, Mrs. Whittler did not despair.

"Well, if we don't do that," she said at last, "we must have a nice Christmas dinner, mustn't we?"

The thought of a dinner brought Whittier to himself instantly. "You bet!" he said, rubbing his hands.

"We'll have the best the country can afford." "I sometimes wish!" said Mrs. Whit-

tler, after a moment, "that we had a houseful of children. It seems a pity to ail down to a Christmas dinner all "Well, why should we?" said Whit-

tier "Can't we ask some one in?" Mrs Whittler looked off into space wth her eyebrows closely knit, as if the problem were too great for her to master on the instant. At last she said slowly:

"How would it do for you to ask Aunt Jane? She's getting along in years. and it may be our last chance to pay her any attention "

Whittier thought a moment "I guess' you're right." he said at last. "I was looking forward to a Christmas dinner by ourselves Still Aunt Jane is a good old soul, and I guess we'd befter ask her But there's Cousin Emily, I suppose she'll have to come.

"Yes," responded Mrs. Whittier - "We shall, of course, have to ask Emily We couldn't ask one without the other " There was a pause Finally Whittler spoke again

"I suppose" be said "If we ask Auct Jane and Emily, that Unrie Henry and Georgiana will feel it !

"I had thought of that " replied Mrs.

Whittler "They've both been kind to us, and it would never do to offend them Then, of course, the children-" "Of course the children " interposed Whittler: "they'll have to come with their parents. Well, we'll have to do it, that's all . I guess we can stand it

for once There was another pause. Mrs. Whitetler at last looked markly up "There's another thing dear" she

said. "that had necurred to me " "What's that?" "Well, you know there's my Aunt Sally Aunt Sally is so sensitive If she hears that your side of the family

is coming, she'll feel it." Whittler sighed But the justice of the argument appealed to him "Yes " he said at lest "I suppose that's so It's nothing more than fair if my people come, that yours should, too But you have a Consin Hufus, and

an Uncle William, baven't you?" It was Mrs. Whittler's turn to sigh-"More than that," she said. "Don't you remember Aunt and Uncle Ruby-

ton and their children "" Whittler got up nervously and paced he floor

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed at last... What are we going to do? It's awful to dwell upon. We simply have get to ask them all. Why, it will cost a mint to entertain all this erowd " He grew more excited

"It's a fearful thing," he said, "to have relatives We're in for it, I guesa We can't top any of 'em off Well!" he cried, turning to Mrs. Whittler, "have you nothing to suggest? You got us fato it. Can't you get us out?"

Mrs. Whittler waited a moment before she replied. "We might go to Florida," she said

finally. Whittler slapped his hands on his

"Just the thing!" he cried "Why didn't you say so before?"-Town Top-

Origin of the Christmas Tree. The Christmas tree is supposed to have originated in Germany, but such is not the case. In reality the Christmas tree is from Egypt, and dates from a period long antecedent to the Christian era. The palm tree is known to put forth a shoot every month, and a spray of this tree with 12 shoots on it was used in Egypt at the time of the winter solstice as a symbol that the year was complete. Egyptian affections of an early date still linger with the Christmas tree. The first Christmas tree was introduced into England and thence into America by some German merchants who fived in Manchester.

Christmas Legend. There is a legend in Germany that

when Eve plucked the fatal apple, immediately the leaves of the tree shriveled into needle points and its bright green turned dark. It changed its nature, and became the evergreen, in all seasons preaching the story of man's fall. Only on Christmas does it bloom brightly with lights and become beautiful with love-gifts-the curse is turned into a blessing at the coming of the Christ Child, and we have our Christmas tree.

BY TOM MASSON

Mrs Goodly What! Don't you like the pleasant Christmas season! Rambling Rawson No'm; ; it ain t pleasant to be driftin eround at a

time when there's so much cookin'

that everybody wants wood out.-

GLOOMY DAYS.

Chicago Daily News THE CHRISTMAS NECKTIES. They Seldom Suit the Recipient, But

the Same. "Look at the trouble that is being stored up there," succeed the morbid pessimist as he pointed to a group of women around the nacktie counter

They Must Be Worn Just

"It would be funny," he continued, "If it were not so tragic. Why it is that lovely woman with all her eye for the beautiful and with all her accomplishments, cannot select a mecktie for a man is one of the things that rank with the unfathomable mysteries of life," says the Philadelphia inquirer. "I would sooner send a blind man to buy me a 'warranted sound' horse than I would enlist the services of a woman to select a necktie

"Think of the fat men that will

wake up on Christmas morning to find in their stocking a delicate emaciated baby pink necktie that will look like a consumptive shoestring when it repower on their boandful expanse of white shirt bosom. Then on the other hand. Bones, the human skeleton, will probably get delirium tremenawhen he is made the religions of a aported necktie big enough to make a shawl for grandmom . Of course, nothing will do for the nice, dignified bid gentleman who never wears anything but a little black law, but a flowing

something that would look nice on grandpa, and so it will go on down the line "On the Christmas necktie! What tragedies are written in thy name!

sash of passionate hue . Willie, the

gay sport, on the other hand, will get

The pessimist paused Then he added thoughtfully. "I would, though, rather have my wife buy mwe a neektië than p∷rk out

The Mistletoe.

Few connect the mistietoe with thewild beings of our Norre ancestors, but it plays a conspicuous part in Scandinavian mythology and the custom of hanging branches of this plant is common among all Norse nations The legends say that Baidur was a but by a mistletoe dait at the instruction of Loke: and in reparation for this injury the plant is dedicated to his mother Fragg so long as it does not touch the earth which is loss a kingdem. That the plane was held in veteeration by the pagans is interred from a passage in Virgi: The Druids acways collected it at the winter solstice and out it with a golden strate from their tavorite oaks. The oaks with mistletoe upon them were always. sacred to these Druids and marvelous were the powers ascribed to the plant.

Modern Christmas.

The gayety of the "Discens Christmas" seems to have insisted chiefly of brandy, multed wine and punch. drunk in enormous quantities, a "good old-fashioned way" of Respins Christmas, the loss of which need not quite move us to tears. When Christmass. comes, we eat and drink less than we did; but the meeting of friends, the performance of kindly deeds for others, the greater readiness to forgive and to forget-this is the essence of the true Christmas spirit, and it is as strong to-day as even

Giving and Receiving.

It may indeed be more blessed to give than to receive, but when the former luxury is not within one's honest reach, it is blessed, too, to reserve from those one thoroughly loves -George S Merriam

Preposterous. Frank-What did you get for your Christmas? lack I got a sent in a Harom car

Frank Nonsenset Don't exagger-

ate! -- Town Topics. The Spirit of Christmas. I will honor Christmas in my heart, I will live in the past, the present and the fature. The spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons which they teach -

. Vanishing Pomp. How worklin prife kin pass away, I's takin' too my tex. What is a Christmas tree one lay -Washington Star

Dickens

Under the Mistletoe. He-This is an ideal spot for lovera isn't it?

She-Yes. What a pity there area't any around —Brooklyn Life.

Always. The woman who looks for the price mark on her Christmas present always gets angry if she finds it. Chicago

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