

VIVE! VIVE! ST. NICHOLAS.

Maggie slept soundly in her squalid bed on Christmas Eve, and as she slept she smiled.

What in Fortune's name made her smile?

Her ill-nourished body should surely be crying out against its unjust treatment! But no! The small face smiled.

The soiled walls of the room frowned down on three little scraps of humanity huddled together at various angles of the bed fitted in to the accommodation with the ingenuity of a jig-saw puzzle.

None too warm either on this bitter night, for, as the worn-out, slovenly mother complained, "Look at the price er blankets and sheets! I reckon its a shime."

Well, so it is. Yet Maggie smiled in her sleep, and clasped her hands ecstatically.

From the next room came intermittently the complaining tones of the woman, and thick utterances in a male voice.

Father and mother sat over the dying embers and mother reiterated from time to time, "I reckon its a shime, that's what it is, to go and spend what yer oughter have bringed 'ome for the childern's Crismis."

"Shut up, carn't yer, or I'll show yer 'ow."

A blow aimed, the mark missed, which landed instead on the smoky lamp—a blaze which caught the paper festooning, the sole suggestion of Christmas—a flame which leaped higher and higher; which caught the family washing on the line—the glittering helmets of the firemen—terror and confusion—and Maggie woke to consciousness some hours later to find herself in a place that was surely fairyland.

Her injuries and shock were so severe that she was almost past very acute pain, and as her eyes lighted on the baby doll at her side, the very best doll from the tree, she lifted with instinctive care a bandaged arm and cuddled it to her side.

"Ain't yer a dear lickle fing," she whispered faintly, and then with a long sigh, half-satisfaction, half suffering, "I've 'ad a lubby Crismis, I 'ave," and again she smiled as though at someone who stood by her side. It wasn't at Nurse, for she stood at the other side of the bed trying to keep the tears from her eyes. "I shouldn't have supposed there was anything very lovely about it," she said to herself.

Whether you like to believe it or not, it was good St. Nicholas, the Saint of little children, whom Maggie saw, and it was he who in her wretched home had come to her in her dreams, and had given her "a lubby Crismis."

He was too old to play, but he had brought some little angels and some of the boys and girls who play in the streets of the Gold City, and they had laughed with happy laughter and played beautiful games with beautiful toys, such as Maggie had never dreamed of.

They had taken her hand and brought her with great confidence to Baby Jesus in the Manger, and he had smiled at her, and His smile had made her feel "ever so nice." St. Nicholas and the little

angels had followed her when she was carried to the hospital in the big fireman's arms and now they were waiting, till presently they carried away her soul to the place where she would always have "a lubby time."

Nurse carried her little body to the pretty Chapel, where the Christmas lights were twinkling round the Crib.

And because she loved her little charges and understood them, and about St. Nicholas, and all such things, which have a great deal more to do with one another than you would think, she laid the baby doll in the tiny arms that were folded on the still breast and then knelt down before the figure of the Child Jesus, and asked Him for the good Saint's protection of all neglected little children.

There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy.

"Vive! vive! St. Nicholas.

"Oh, pour nous, pour nous, quel beau Jour de Fête."

H. H.

Feast of St. Nicholas,
December 6th.

BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"TAMARISK TOWN."*

This remarkable book will surely stand in the forefront of the fiction of the day. Original in its conception, its literary merit is of the highest order, and bears the impress of thoughtful and careful workmanship, which is a real refreshment after much of the slovenly and hasty work of many present-day novels.

Such characters as Monnypenny and Morgan le Fay are the creations of an imaginative brain and of a student of psychology.

It is a book that merits more than one reading, and those of our readers who can appreciate a good thing will doubtless not be content until they have savoured much of its fascinating writing once again.

In a few words the gist of the story is as follows:—

Marlingate, a fishing hamlet with the green of the tamarisks hazing its streets, was much beloved by Monnypenny, the owner of Gun Garden House, and he was full of dreams for its future development. It was a picturesque and pleasant spot, and its charms are described by the pen of an artist:—

"Marlingate stayed a tumble and trickle of red and black on the edge of the sea, with the woods pressing flat and sullen against it, a little bit of time poised between two threatening eternities."

Monnypenny conceived plans for the development of the hamlet, which only needed financial backing. With this end in view he approached Beckett, a man of middle age and of considerable wealth.

* By Sheila Kaye-Smith. Cassell & Co., Ltd.

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