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What the Robin Told The Holly Sprig

By MARY BAIN BILTON

ON a mountain side grew a sprig of holly. Beneath, in the valley, nestled a village, and the holly could see the people moving about, the cattle going to and from the brook for water; indeed, there was constant motion, while the holly sprig was always still except when the wind set it in motion. One morning a robin lit on the holly sprig, clutching it with its tiny claws.

"How I wish I were you!" said the sprig to the bird. "You can fly anywhere and see what is going on, while I am doomed to hang here, passing my life in one spot."

"Yes," said the robin, "I can go about and see the world, and I have opportunities of learning. The other day—it was Sunday—I perched on a limb near a church and heard the clergyman say that one of the greatest blessings was contentment."

Then the robin flew away.

One winter morning when the snow had fallen the holly sprig heard merry voices, sounding very loud in the moist air, coming up the mountain side, and presently a number of children approached. They were gathering holly, and one of them took hold of the little holly twig and twisted it off its parent bush. Then it was thrown into a bag with other sprigs and taken down to the village. For a time it lay perfectly still, but suddenly the mouth of the bag was opened, a hand thrust in and the holly taken out.

Then for the first time the holly sprig saw a new sight. It was in a lighted room where boys and girls were at work. The girls were tying evergreens together and making ropes of them, while the boys were standing on tables and stepladders arranging the ropes on the walls in festoons. Some of the girls were making evergreen wreaths and hanging them in the windows. One little girl took the holly sprig and hung it to a chandelier.

The holly sprig was supremely happy. How much more delightful was this than the bleak mountain side, with no change from day to day! It was somewhat disappointed when the boys and girls put out the lights and went out, leaving the room in darkness. It could see nothing, whereas in its mountain home on clear nights it could see the stars, and often the moon lighted up the trees about it and the valley below. However, in the morning the children came back to view their work, and people were coming and going all day, so that the holly sprig was not lonely. Indeed, it was charmed with its altered condition, which, it supposed, would last forever.

That day a young evergreen tree was brought into the room and stood before the chimney piece. The children brought in boxes, from which they took little wax candles and fixed them all over the tree. From other boxes they took iridescent and gilt globes, spangles and tinsel chains, which they scattered in profusion among the branches. But the climax of delight to the holly was in the evening, when the children

THE HOLLY SPRIG SAW A NEW SIGHT.

all came in together. The candles were lighted, and all stood about admiring the beautiful tree.

"What a happy change for me!" exclaimed the holly sprig. "Had not the children come and brought me down here I should now be a part of my parent bush, out in the cold wind, with nothing above me but a murky sky, nothing beneath but the cold snow."

Then some of the elder people who were present went to the evergreen tree and took off boxes and packages they had hung there in the night when the children were in bed and distributed them among the little ones. Each package was marked with the name of the child for whom it was intended and was opened eagerly. The holly sprig, hanging high in the center of the room, could see everything and as each child opened its package watched eagerly to see what was being unwrapped. There was frequent clapping of hands, shouts of laughter, everything expressive of happiness.

"This is delightful," said the holly spring to itself. "I wonder if they are going to do this often."

By and by, when the merrymaking had lasted a long while, the candles on the tree were extinguished and the children were sent to bed. Then their parents put out the lights, and the room was dark. But the holly sprig had so much to remember that it did

(Continued on Seventh page.)

There is no disputing the fact that man's heart is often reached through the stomach. Happy the housewife who can please her husband's appetite with well cooked food for the table. Many a man is grouchy, ugly, nervous, suffering from distress after eating, heart palpitation, and all through the overworked stomach.

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