

THE WERTHEIMER NEW YEAR BABY  
BY MARIE BOTHLILDA

**M**R. WERTHEIMER wanted a baby.

Mrs. Wertheimer's aspirations for a household center of attraction was substantially in the same direction.

It must be admitted here, however, that the desires of the two for the same object did not emanate from the same viewpoint; there was nothing marital in their thought, the son-and-heir idea never occurring to either of them.

A dog, a cat and a canary bird had hitherto been the objects of Mr. Wer-

and a string of children too young to help care for it. It seemed to him that the world was cold and unfeeling, for the neighbors, instead of offering any assistance, intimated quite plainly that "poor people who kept on having children should be able to provide for them without holding outsiders responsible by soliciting help."

In spite of its unwelcome reception the seventh Hopkins was really the finest of the lot, a bright, healthy and attractive baby. In his extremity the father advertised it for adoption, and his advertisement was what Mrs. Wertheimer saw, when in the throes of her desire to procure one. It was a windfall, and as soon as she set her eyes upon it she recognized a fine brand to be snatched from the burn-

and her idea of duty became very much modified. In fact, she complained of the trouble the baby was giving her, in addition to which there was a trifle of jealousy. Mr. Wertheimer devoted all his time to the infant and none to her. True, she had never invited his caresses, but that did not make any difference; the baby had wedged in between them, and she was crowded out of her rightful, though unappropriated place.

The matter rankled in Mrs. Wertheimer's mind, and the thought of getting rid of it grew in her heart. So it was, that one night when Mr. Wertheimer had hurried home, ready for a romp before supper, there were no signs of life in the house; no barking dog, no singing bird, no crowing hen.

"Where's the baby?" he inquired of his stern-faced wife, with a sudden mistrust in his heart.

"Oh, yes, it's always baby, baby, nothing but baby," answered the woman, petulantly. "I suppose you wouldn't have cared if I had caught my death of cold, or worked my fingers to the bone waiting on it, as long as you could have something to play with. I made up my mind last night, after I had gotten up three times to attend to it, that I would not be imposed upon any longer, so this morning I took it to the Foundling Asylum and—"

"You took—that—poor—child to an asylum?" stammered Mr. Wertheimer with sudden anger and a curl of contempt on his lips. "You took that little motherless child to a public institution after promising its father that you would take its mother's

no! say it, because I know now that I was wrong. My heart is big enough for both you and the baby, so let us go after it before we do anything else."

But the baby was not there, another woman who wanted a baby having taken it away. It was too late that evening to do more, so procuring the address, Mrs. Wertheimer resolved to start after her baby early in the morning—it was her baby now, truly.

A vigorous, impatient pull at the bell and a young woman with a weak, childish face appeared. There were traces of recent tears, and the cheeks were red with much rubbing.

"If this is Mrs. Harris, permit me to enter and state the object of my visit," said Mrs. Wertheimer, with many misgivings.

But when she had entered, she heard a baby's soft gurgle, and sure enough, there was her baby on the bed in an inner room, as sweet and as dimpled as ever, making the best of it in her strange quarters. Mrs. Wertheimer told her story and begged Mrs. Harris to let her have the baby back.

"I can never be happy without it," she confessed, with tears running down her cheeks.

"Well, now, isn't that funny," said Mrs. Harris. "I made up my mind that I must have a baby because all my friends were poking fun at me for being without one. So I thought I would surprise my husband and have one here some night ready for him when he got home. But, my gracious, you should have heard him. He was as mau as a March hare and wanted to know what I meant by

Roxana," and he tossed the squealing infant up in the air, while Jack, the dog, tried to jump and catch its tiny feet as they dangled just beyond his reach.

Christmas in Mantown.

A Missing Camp Story.

"Mantown" had been snowed in forty days. It was on the night before Christmas the thing happened which I am going to tell you. You will not find Mantown on the map of California, for the reason that it mostly ceased to be before the map was made.

When the Parson, who was an early riser, threw the wet floursack he had wiped his hands and face on at my head and said: "The old lady up there's pickin' her geese, Tom," and Polaris and I looked out and saw the feathery white flakes falling, we laughed. When it kept on and on till the snow was nine feet deep the laugh was on the other side of our mouth. The snow settled and froze, and we were in for it.

There was whisky enough and provisions enough, so that we did not fear dying of thirst and hunger, but we were pining for amusement.

Forty days and forty nights shaking dice and playing poker at the Red Goose had become monotonous. The Red Goose was a saloon. The way it got its name was this—which is also the beginning of the end of the thing that happened. It was all finished, the saloon was, and ready for business, and a big smooth signboard waiting to be painted, but there wasn't a man there could paint it. We were falling into the way of speaking of it as "Old Bob's" when along came a dandy-looking young chap.

Old Bob asked him if he could paint a sign for a saloon. He asked what kind of a sign was wanted. Old Bob told him he wanted a figure of a great originality and one that would tell the name without any printed matter. He always put on airs in his speech when he thought he knew more than the other fellow did, and the dandy chap was modest-looking, in spite of his clothes.

Well, the stranger took the job, and when it was done and put up over the door and old Bob came out to size it up he was roaring mad. He swore he wouldn't pay for it. The figures painted on it was a big red goose. The painter called all the town to prove that he had painted according to order by asking each one separately what it was. Every one of them said, "Red Goose." He then asked pointedly if it was not of "great originality," and every one to a man said it was the first red goose they had ever seen. So old Bob had to pay for the sign and set up the drinks besides.

It was that night I spoke of—the

fire to himself. He stretched his long, slender fingers in the warmth of the large blaze, warmed his feet at it and turned his back to warm. His eyes wandered round the big, ugly room and lit on the piano.

The man at the fire set his glance so questioningly on the instrument that Polaris volunteered to tell him that it was a "pianner," and asked him if he could play on the "critter."

He said he used to play a little, and began to rub his hands together. In a minute a dozen voices were urging him to play. He said he was afraid his fingers were too stiff. They gave him a drink of whisky and seated him at the piano. He ran his fingers along the keys several times and began to play. The men looked up from their cards. He played the piece through and part of "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and stopped to rub his hands and straighten his fingers.

He threw his head back and the long, wind-blown hair slid down on his shoulders. His voice rose in volume and richness and thrilled us with its vibrant sweetness.

Plank by plank the blood-stained floor slipped out; inch by inch the smoke-grimed walls dissolved; the bottles and glasses melted away.

The thousands of miles of savage wilderness and trackless desert they had conquered to reach this golden fringe of creation were not. And out of the pure white moonlight and the diamond-crystallized snow stole in the faces and forms at home, sweet home.

There was a grand roll of song and round, a low, slow wail of melody, a snap, twang and silence.

The men waited, each in his attitude of listening, for the length of a breath, and then one big, concordant sigh broke the stillness. By ones and twos and threes, without a word or a sign, they went out into the silence and the snow.

This would be a good place to stop the story, but it did not happen that way at the Red Goose.

The first ones in to get their morning "dram" found the proprietor in a towering rage. He said he thought that old musician a nugget forty karats fine that had just rolled itself into his hands for a Christmas present. He had made him a bed by the fire, taking the grizzly bear skin from his own bunk to make the floor softer for him, and told him there was plenty of wood in the corner and for him to just help himself at the bar. And when he put his head in at the partition door and called "Christmas Gift" to wake the old chap up to breakfast he was gone. So was the grizzly skin he slept on—so was the gold in the box on the wall end of the bar; four thousand dollars in gold dust—every ounce of it gone.

In its place he had found a piece of



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Wertheimer's amusements when off duty, but he had grown weary of the monotony of all three and wanted something human that he could love, pet and perish—animals did not seem to fill the void in his heart. Moreover, he was a jolly sort of a man and felt the need of something to bubble and rush over. His home environments were—well, were somewhat frigid.

On the contrary, Mrs. Wertheimer was a strict disciplinarian on the score of duty, dogmatic and unyielding in her disposition, and opposed to sentimental displays; even her smiles when she forgot herself and indulged in such worldliness, were frost-bitten. But she had gathered the idea at the Woman's club, during a protracted and heated discussion on the subject, that it was the duty of every woman to assume the guardianship of at least one embryo human being, for the purpose of training it according to the standard recognized by the club, in the right way, of course, and thus save an immortal soul from contamination by the wickedness of the world, which was badly in need of making over again. Besides that, the lady had noticed the waning influence of the dog, cat and bird to keep Mr. Wertheimer at home in the evenings. Hence, Mrs. Wertheimer thought a baby in the house might accomplish a double object, to wit: A haio and a stay-at-home husband.

"Let me see," she said, pausing in her dusting. "John and I quarreled on Thanksgiving day, and to make him understand that he was in the wrong, I gave him corned beef and cabbage for dinner instead of turkey. Then again, on Christmas day he was not as liberal as I thought he should have been, and the turkey was tough there weren't any cranberries, and the only dessert was bread pudding instead of plum—accidental, of course. To make up with him, I think I will present him with a baby on New Year's day, and that will keep him at home for a year at least. But where shall I get one?"

Now it so happened that Mr. John Hopkins had more children than he could care for; half a dozen of them reaching up like the steps of a ladder, all vigorously healthy and constantly clamoring for something to eat and wear. His wages not increasing with his family, it was very difficult to get even bread. To add to his misery, Mrs. Hopkins committed the folly of presenting him with a seventh, and, as a last straw, she up and died in the midst of its raising, leaving him forlorn with an eight-months-old baby

ing, and adopted it at once, but Mr. Hopkins was not to deliver the baby girl until an hour or so before the husband's home-coming on New Year's eve, so as to be a surprise for him.

When Mr. Wertheimer returned home after his day's toil on the evening in question, he was amazed to find sprawling on the floor, surrounded with soft pillows, a chubby-faced, blue-eyed infant, with little wisps of golden curls hanging around a shapely head. It was bobbing around in a wobbly fashion, its tiny hands stretched out trying to reach a large gray cat, wisely sitting just beyond its grasp, blinking at the new acquisition in sleepy wonder. Jack, the dog, was manifesting his approval of the new arrival by furiously barking and wagging his stumpy tail, at the same time frisking around and upsetting the cat, drawing her about by the tail, and performing other astonishing feats to entertain the baby.

"Great Caesar!" he exclaimed. "What's the row anyway? Have you started a menagerie?"

"This is our baby," exclaimed Mrs. Wertheimer, relating her experience and intentions.

"Well, now we'll have some fun and life around the house," said he, getting down on the floor to investigate the new plaything. "She's mighty pretty, anyway," was his decision. In a few moments he was mixed up with baby, dog and cat in such a noisy revel that his wife, with an expression of disapproval, came in from the kitchen, where she had gone to prepare supper.

"John, I didn't know you could make such a fool of yourself. Just look at your clothes, all lint and dust, and you are making more noise than the whole lot put together. Have you no consideration for the neighbors?"

"Well, what did you get her for, if you don't want me to play with her?" And he laughed good-naturedly. "I can't just sit and look at her; that ain't enough."

"I took her," responded his wife severely, "because it is our duty to make a home for some child that didn't have a good one. You'll make such a fuss over this one that it will soon be spoiled, and I want it to grow up good and sensible. I have my own ideas about its training. Come, get up, supper's ready."

For two weeks Mr. Wertheimer lived in paradise, and, strange to say, he never once went out in the evening. But not so Mrs. Wertheimer. Babies require a good deal of care and attention; she had not calculated on this,



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place? I thought every woman had some love in her heart, if not for her husband, then at least for a helpless babe, but you—a nice religion you have, with all your prating about Christian duty and charity—it is despicable."

Mrs. Wertheimer was appalled at this outburst from her husband who had always been kind and gentle, and his contemptuous look and bitter language frightened her. Womanlike, she began to cry, at which her husband softened and looked surprised. It was the first time he had ever seen tears in her eyes. Could it be possible that she had a heart?

"Martha, I said more than I should have; pardon me. Never mind about the baby, it's only one more disappointment and I will live through it." With that he turned away, but his wife, whose eyes were opened to the full significance of what she had done, called him back and putting her hands upon his shoulders looked him full in the face, with a strange, unwanted expression in her eyes.

"John, I must tell you the truth now. It was not heartlessness, it was because—oh, John, do you not understand? I was jealous of your love for the child. I was afraid you had ceased to love me. My hardness was all assumed, John. Say you forgive me, and I will go this moment and get the child again."

The woman's habitual reserve melted under the tender caress of her husband.

"Dear wife, I have always loved you, but it seemed to me that you did not love me, you were so—no, I will

bringing home a strange brat. I told him I wanted something to love and cuddle," and he said, "Love and cuddle? Nonsense! Can't you love and cuddle me? That's what I married you for, anyway. You just take that brat back where you found it. I won't have it around." He was so mad that he went away this morning without kissing me good-by, a thing he has never done before," and she wept at the terrible recollection. Then recovering herself, she snapped out:

"Take it away. I never want to see another baby."

When Mr. Wertheimer returned that evening, there was the baby in her accustomed place on the floor, with the dog performing his old tricks, and the bird splitting its throat with melody, the cat purring an accompaniment. But what was more to him, there was his wife who met him at the door with a loving caress, something that had not happened since their honeymoon, a long time before.

"Hurrah for the baby!" he shouted. "This is what I call a happy family." Mrs. Wertheimer put the baby in his arms.

"It is our New Year's baby, dear husband," she said softly; "my cruel conduct—"

"No more of that," said Mr. Wertheimer, hugging wife and baby together. "The past is forgotten, and we shall begin the New Year over again, but we must give the baby an appropriate name. I have it," he exclaimed after a moment's thought. "Roxana, that's her name; it means the 'Dawn of Day,' and that's what she has been to us. So, here you are,



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night before Christmas. The boys kept a roaring fire in the fireplace and tried to keep the cheer going, but it was too plainly an effort—all except at the card tables. The most improbable things always happen without warning. In at the door of the Red Goose, like a bird blown from the night, came a shivering, oldish-looking man. His hair was long and a stubby beard hid the under half of his face. He was lost, he said, and nearly froze, and had the rheumatism and wanted to warm at the fire.

paper with some lead-pencil scribbings on it, which read:

Excuse my leave-taking unheard, And the hour, for my way it is far; Taking you as a man of your word, I have helped myself at the bar.

For your kindness I give this advice: Never leave your dust lay round loose. Never trust either women or mice—I painted your sign of the goose.

The laugh was on old Bob.—San Francisco Call.