

A "BEARFOOT" CHRISTMAS

By EMILY BURKS ADAMS



THE beautifully decorated house, the gently falling snow, the brisk atmosphere, the purity, and the expectancy of loved ones, evidenced the presence of Christmas.

Merry laughter and hurried steps assured Mrs. Bearfoot that her adored son and daughter had arrived.

"Hello, mother, a Merry Christmas," shouted Rose and Wayne. "You've heard about Edith, mother, so here she is. I know you'll love her; Edith does, and I'm about to. Shake hands with mother, Edith," continued Wayne, excitedly.

"Yes, we are so glad to have you, Miss Bearrow," said Mrs. Bearfoot, as she shook hands with Edith.

"Thank you. I am delighted to be here and to know you. What a thrill I'm having! I'm wild about Oklahoma. Rose and Wayne think they have a joke on me because I thought all those oil wells were windmills."

"Yes, mother," interrupted Wayne. Edith said, "How all those windmills remind me of Holland!"

"Oh, well, I shall be all the wiser when I return to Chicago. I'm anxious to see all the Indians Rose and Wayne have told me about. Are they joking me about that, too? I hope so, for I am mortally afraid of Indians, but of course the government keeps them guarded."

"Yes, Edith, if I may call you Edith," and she caught the twinkle in her son's eye. "The Indians need watching; they are cunning. Wayne is a good athlete and will see that you are not scalped, at least."

"Well, I want to climb to the top of one of those windmills. All the wells I know anything about go down, and I shall still call those tall things windmills! I want to see a topee and an Indian chief, too, before I return home."

Dinner was served and Edith noticed the exquisite table service and appointments. The drawing room was spacious and Edith marveled at the magnificent furnishings. The rugs were Oriental; the pictures were done by master artists; and the culture of



"I'll Count It a Mighty Fine Christmas Present."

the home was in keeping with the elegant furnishings.

Rose and her mother were visiting, as only a mother and daughter can, after a four months' separation. "Oh, Edith, how funny Edith thinks Oklahoma is wild. Don't you like her? She is a dear, and Wayne is crazy about her. I think it is mutual, however. Her idea of Indians so amuses us."

Wayne and Edith were visiting as if they, too, had been separated several months. "Well, Edith, what think you of Ponca now, and of mother? She is some mother, I tell you. You need not fear the Indians. Now that you've met mother and have seen Ponca, aren't you ready to give me that answer? I'll count it a mighty fine Christmas present."

"Oh, Wayne, you must wait until after the community tree. I want to see some of those natives. All good things are worth waiting for, you know, and besides, it isn't time yet to give our presents."

It was Christmas Eve, and Edith and Wayne were talking of the community tree. Mrs. Bearfoot, a crowd there was Wayne. The speaking was next to divine; but where were the Indians?

The man who sang that beautiful hymn solo was at one time an Indian chief; the girl, who gave that impressive oration was his granddaughter. The Indians were all around you, Edith."

Edith's eyes opened—"Oh! I thought all Indians were blankets and moccasins!" "Edith, the Indian of today is civilized. A race that has suffered, yes; but a truly American race; a race that was sent from place to place; a race that fought and won. Only a small portion of their vast inheritance was allotted them, but that portion has waxed rich in oil. I am an Indian, Edith, nor would I conceal it. I am bestowing upon you the highest honor man can give to woman. Will you become my wife, Edith—the wife of an Indian—a man who would die for his race and you? If you will promise me this will be the happiest Christmas of my life."

"Yes, Wayne, I promise. I want to be the wife of an Indian—a Bearfoot Indian—with a brave athlete as my husband." "The radio was tuned in and a Merry Christmas to all," was the greeting.

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