

BRINGING the FAIRIES to BROADWAY

The Story of a Hand-Made Christmas

by

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THERE once lived in a garret a man named Emmanuel Fink, who was not only old and ugly and poor, but who, in deliberate contradiction of Christian doctrines, delighted in considering himself wicked. He hated the world, he hated people, he hated things. It is true that the world always had knocked him about as something superfluous, that people had never cared whether he lived or died, and that pleasant things had never come his way. He had, from birth, inherited trouble and care, and only after many phases of privation had he reached the shabby garret of this dubious lodging house on the dark side of the great noisy city.

The child was not strong enough nor old enough to take the place of the maid of all work, which in itself was sufficient source of grievance. Amelia could not run up and downstairs without coughing, could not carry heavy packages, could not think quickly, or bring back beer from a neighboring saloon without spilling it. In short she was more of a nuisance than a help. So she was kept most of the day in the kitchen stirring bean soup of which the landlady was very fond, or washing dishes in scalding water. She had never seen the mad lodger in the garret, who made monsters.

Then one day they met.

It was on the stairs. All the way down from the top floor, Old Fink had been making faces, partly from habit, partly to keep in practice. He was carrying, wrapped in a crumpled newspaper, a batch of monsters to offer to the toy merchant. Amelia was toiling up the stairs, clutching a pitcher of foaming beer. When she saw Emmanuel Fink making faces, she was so terrified that she screamed at the top of her thin little voice, and dropped the pitcher which fell with a loud thump and broke into a hundred bits. Whereupon she turned and fled back to the kitchen.

OLD Fink stood staring after her. He told himself that he was delighted to have actually frightened somebody. "All on account of me," he murmured. "If only she knew how wicked I was."

Then he stepped gingerly over the bits of broken pitcher, soaking his shabby shoes in the beer which was dripping from step to step. "Pity to waste it," he mumbled thirstily, and continued his way in haste, for already he heard the shrill scolding voice of the landlady from the third floor, calling, "Melia—A-melia."

The little Jew met him gloomily. "Say, I've had enough monsters," he growled.

"But these are beauties," cried Emmanuel Fink eagerly.

"Naw!" snarled the Jew. "I tell you they give kids the Jim Jams," and he turned his back on Fink, and began crossly dusting a blue, glassy-eyed doll with pink cheeks and flaxen hair.

"But—" persisted Fink.

"I know my business," said the merchant disagreeably. "They were a novelty at first. Now nobody wants 'em."

Emmanuel Fink glared at him defiantly, hugged his package closer and strode from the shop, upsetting a wooden horse in the doorway.

"Hey there," shrieked the tradesman, but Old Fink did not listen. He walked away in the shadows of the late afternoon.

It was December and very cold. Fink wandered aimlessly towards Sixth Avenue, where the lights blazing from shops hit his blinking eyes, like hostile things, exposing without mercy, beneath their crude glare, the dilapidated condition of his thin clothes, the unshaven hollows of his cheeks, the fierce wrinkles about his eyebrows. The elevated roared fitfully over his head. Idlers brushed his elbows and busy passers-by shoved him aside. In the distance the great silhouettes of titanic buildings loomed like feudal towers against a wintry sky.

"They're all monsters," murmured Old Fink disconsolately. There seemed no place for him anywhere. The life of the city surged and swayed about him in uneven rhythms. Forlornly at last, he turned and trudged back to the dingy lodging house. Amelia, in the entry, saw him and scuttled away. He pretended not to notice her. But once in his room he went to the cracked mirror.

"I guess I can look like other folks if I want to. That child needn't think . . ." He tried to smile. But it was as if the pleasant muscles of his face were rusty. He only achieved a comical leer. With that, however, he was well content.

Now he faced want. His little store, put by for a rainy day, would keep him for a week or so—no more. He could not go back to the Jew and he was too discouraged to try other toy shops. He only knew (Continued on Page 9)



The child watched him, passionately absorbed in the deft movements of his fingers

But even a garret and its attendant roof cost money. So to continue life such as it was, to earn the shelter of the roof and the right to exist at all, Emmanuel Fink worked. Perhaps under other circumstances he might have been a famous sculptor; as it was he carved little monsters in wood, painted them red or green, and sold them to an evil rapacious old Jew who owned a toy shop.

He needed small imagination in their making. What he did was to stare at himself in the crazy cracked mirror hanging near his miserable cot and twist his face into ingenious grimaces, as if it were made of rubber. The tricks played him by the mirror, his natural ugliness and his instincts of a caricaturist, provided enough ideas for an army of monsters. They glared from the dusty corners of the room; they formed fierce miniature battalions trailing in fantastic file from rickety chair legs to the decrepit cot; they smirked odiously ranged along the walls, and sprawled under the bed. They peered diabolically from the high window through which straggled pitifully a scrap of light on very sunny days. Gutsh, father of them all, a toad with a man's face, lurked near the door, and frightened the little maid of all work every time she entered the room, which was seldom.

CRAZY Emmanuel Fink loved these monsters, because after all it is every man's nature to love something or someone, and he hated everything else. Also because in making them, he felt he was revenging himself on the detestable world. They were his expression of defiance.

But in spite of his work, and the long hungry days when he fashioned monsters so skilfully, the wherewithal to eat was scarce. He barely eked out an existence. One night as he toiled before the cracked mirror in the light of a flickering candle, inventing grimaces one more horrible than the other, because he was hungry and because he was discouraged and lonely, he wept. Nothing could have been more lamentably grotesque than the convulsion of his lean wrinkled face unaccustomed to tears. Inspired by this supreme grimace, he made a monster and called it Pain. This monster he did not try to sell. He loved it more than all the others.

Now the landlady had seven years ago brought a child into the world. For seven years, accordingly, she had called this unwelcome addition to the household, a nuisance. Not that the child, Amelia, was naughty or noisy, or especially ailing; but her pallid young presence annoyed the thin-lipped miserly mother.



No one indeed paid any attention to the forlorn couple