

BOYS' AND GIRLS' PAGE

Silver Hen and the Wonderful Christmas Trees

DAME DOROTHEA PENNY kept a private school. It was quite a small school on account of the size of her house. She had only 12 scholars and they filled it quite full; indeed, one very little boy had to sit in the brick oven. On this account Dame Penny was obliged to do all her cooking on a Saturday, when school did not keep.

It was on a Thursday that Dame Penny first missed her silver hen, whose feathers looked exactly as if they had been dipped in liquid silver. When the scholars assembled she called the school to order and told them of

with fruit by the next Christmas day. Every Christmas day they were cut down and sold, but they always grew again to their full height in a year's time. These trees, when in full fruitage, were festooned with strings of popcorn, and weighed down with apples and oranges and bags of candy, and it was really an amazing sight to see them out there in Dame Louisa's front yard. But now they were all yellow and dead, and not so much as one popcorn whitened the upper branches, neither was there one candle shining out in the night.

Dame Louisa looked at her dead Christmas trees and scowled. She could see the children out in the road, and they were trudging along in the direction of the White Woods. "Let 'em go," she

screamed and looked for the owner of it. He loomed up among some bushes at their feet. He was dazzling white—it was the real Snow Man. They knew him in a moment; he looked so much like his effigies that they used to make in their yards.

"We don't keep any hens," repeated the Snow Man. "What are you calling hens for in this forest?" The children huddled together as close as they could, and the oldest boy explained. "Well," said the Snow Man, "I haven't seen the silver hen. I never did see any hens in these woods, but she may be around here for all that. You had better go home with me and spend the night."

"Hot!" when the poor scholars were quite stiff with cold. They looked at one another in dismay, but did not dare say anything. They followed the Snow Man's wife into her grand parlor.

"Come right over here by the north window, where it is cooler," said she, "and the children shall bring you some fans."

The poor children, fanning themselves, on an ice diwan, would certainly have frozen if the Snow Man's wife had not suggested that they all have a little game of "pass-in-the-cornucopia" to while away the time before dinner. That warned them up a little, but the Snow Man's wife stopped the play a little before dinner was announced; she said the guests looked so warm that she was alarmed and was afraid they might melt.

The silver hen and the children by turns. "Come, Dame Penny," said Dame Louisa, "I want you to go with me to the White Woods and rescue the children. Bring out all the tubs and pails you have in the house, and we will pump them full of water."

"The pails—full of water—what for?" gasped Dame Penny. "To thaw them out," replied Dame Louisa. "They will very likely be wholly or partly frozen, and I have always heard that cold water was the only remedy to use."

Dame Penny said no more. She brought out all her tubs and pails, and they pumped them, and Dame Louisa's full of water, and packed them into the sleigh—there were 12 of them. Then they climbed into the seat, slipped the reins over the back of the old white horse and started off for the White Woods.

velocity. Dame Louisa whipped up the horse, but the Snow Man gained on them. "Oh!" shrieked Dame Penny, "what shall we do, what shall we do?"

"Be quiet," said Dame Louisa. She untied her large poke bonnet which was made of straw—she was unable to have a velvet one for winter, now her Christmas trees were dead—and she hung it on her pocket, and set fire to the bonnet. The light blazed up brightly, and the Snow Man stopped short. "If you come any nearer," shrieked Dame Louisa, "I'll put this right in your face and melt you!"

"Give me back my company," shouted the Snow Man. "You can't have your company," said Dame Louisa, shaking the blazing bonnet defiantly at him. "To think of the days I've spent in their wards, slowly melting and suffering everything and my not having one visit back," grumbled the Snow Man. But he stood still; he never took a step forward

"Oh! what is that twinkling out in the yard?" cried the children. They could all see little fairy-like lights twinkling out in Dame Louisa's yard.

"It looks just as the Christmas trees used to," said Dame Penny. "Oh! I can't believe it," cried Dame Louisa, her heart beating wildly. "But when they came opposite the yard, they saw that it was true. Dame Louisa's Christmas trees stood there all twinkling with lights, and covered with trailing garlands of popcorn, oranges, apples and candy bags; their yellow branches had turned green and the Christmas trees were in full glory."

"Oh! what is that shining so out in Dame Penny's yard?" cried the children, who were entirely thawed, and only needed to get lemon to their parents and have some warm breakfast, and Christmas presents to be quite themselves. "Biddy, Biddy, Biddy," cried Dame Penny. "It was, indeed, the silver hen, and following her were 12 little silver chickens."

her terrible loss. All the scholars crooked their arms over their faces and wept, for they were very fond of Dame Penny, and also of the silver hen. Every one of them wore one of her silver tail feathers in the best bonnet or hat, as the case might be. Dame Penny had presented them from time to time as rewards for good behavior.

After Dame Penny had told the school, she dismissed it, and gave her pupils permission to search for the silver hen. She offered the successful one the most beautiful present he had ever seen. It was about three weeks before Christmas.

The children searched with no success till the day before Christmas. Then they thought they would ask Dame Louisa, who had the reputation of being quite a wise woman and lived next door. If she knew of any more likely places in which they could hunt.

The 12 scholars walked two by two up to Dame Louisa's front door and knocked. They were very quiet and spoke only in whispers, because they knew Dame Louisa was nervous, and did not like children very well. But in spite of their efforts to be quiet they awoke her from a nap, and she came to the door very much out of humor.

"I don't know where you'll find the hen," said she peevishly, "unless you go to the White Woods for it."

"Thank you, ma'am," said the children with courtesy, and they all turned and went down the path between the dead Christmas trees.

Dame Louisa had no idea that they would go to the White Woods. She had said it quite at random, although she was so vexed at being disturbed in her nap that she wished for a moment that they would stand in her front door and look at her dead Christmas trees, and that always made her feel crosser, and she had not at any time a pleasant disposition. Indeed, it was rumored among the townspeople that that had blasted her Christmas trees, that Dame Louisa's scolding, fretting voice had floated out to them and smote their delicate twigs like a bitter frost and made them turn yellow; for the real Christmas tree is not very hardy.

snapped to herself. "I guess they won't go far. I'll be rid of their noise, anyway."

She could hear poor Dame Penny's distressed voice out in her yard, calling "Biddy, Biddy, Biddy," and she scowled more fiercely than ever. "I'm glad she's lost her old silver hen," she muttered to herself. She had always suspected the silver hen of pecking at the roots of the Christmas trees, and so causing them to blast.

Dame Louisa had a very wise book, which she had consulted to find the reason for the death of her Christmas trees, but all she could find in it was one short item, which did not satisfy her at all. "Christmas trees—Very delicate when transplanted, especially sensitive and liable to blast at any change in the moral atmosphere. Remedy: Discover and confess the cause."

After reading this, Dame Louisa was always positive that Dame Penny's silver hen was at the root of the mischief, for she knew that she herself had never done anything to hurt the trees.

Dame Penny was so occupied in calling "Biddy, Biddy, Biddy," that she never noticed the children taking the road toward the White Woods. If she had done so, she would have stopped them, for the White Woods was considered a dangerous place. It was called white because it was always white, even in midsummer. The trees and bushes and all the undergrowth, every flower and blade of grass were white with snow and frost all the year round. Nobody had penetrated very far into the White Woods, although many expeditions had been organized for that purpose. The road was so terrible that it drove them back.

The children had heard all about the terrors of the White Woods. When they drew near it, they took hold of one another's hands and mumbled as closely together as possible. When they struck into the path at the entrance, the intense cold turned their cheeks and noses blue in a moment, but they kept on, calling "Biddy, Biddy, Biddy," in their shrill sweet trebles.

It was quite late in the afternoon when they started, and pretty soon the snow went down and the moon arose, and that made it seem colder. It was like traveling through a forest of solid silver then. About two hours after the moon arose, as they were creeping along, a singular, hoarse voice repeated suddenly, "We don't keep any hens," said the voice, and all the children jumped and

My wife will be delighted to see you. We have never had any company in our lives, and she is always scolding about it."

The children looked at one another and shook their heads. They had done with cold. With that the Snow Man seized the right ear of the oldest boy between his finger and thumb and danced him along, and all the rest, trembling and whimpering under their breaths, followed.

It was not long before they reached the Snow Man's house, a castle built of blocks of ice fitted together like bricks, and with two splendid snow lions keeping guard at the entrance. The Snow Man's wife stood in the door, and the Snow Children stood behind her and peeped around her skirts.

"We have some company, wife," shouted the Snow Man. "Bring them right in," said his wife, with a beaming face. She was very handsome, and wore a trailing white robe, like a Queen. She kissed the children all around, and then crept down their backs, for it was like being kissed by an icicle.

"Now," said the Snow Man's wife, "come right in and sit down where it is cool—you look very hot."

After dinner they were colder than ever, and their parents said that the Snow Man's wife suggested that they go to bed, for they had visions of warm blankets and comfortable beds. But when they entered the great covering chamber, with its walls of solid ice, its ice floor and its ice beds, their hearts sank. Not a blanket nor comfortable bed was to be seen, but there were great silk bags stuffed with snowflakes instead of feathers on the beds, and that was all.

They were frantic with cold and terror, and the little ones began to cry. They talked over the situation and agreed that they had better wait until the house was quiet and then run away. So they waited until they thought everybody must be asleep, and then cautiously stole toward the door. It was locked fast on the outside. The Snow Man's wife had slipped an icicle through the latch and they were in.

the reason why my Christmas trees were blasted." Dame Louisa drove straight to the Snow Man's house, where she left Dame Penny to hold the horses, and went in; the outer door was not locked. When she came to the door with the icicle through the latch she knew at once that the children were in that room, so she drew out the icicle and entered. The children were asleep, but she aroused them, and they got out of the house without disturbing any of the family; but, once out, a new difficulty beset them. The children had been so nearly warm under their snowflake beds that they began to freeze the minute the icy air struck them.

But Dame Louisa promptly seized them and put them into the tubs and pails of water. Then they started off for home at full speed.

But it was not long before they discovered that they were pursued. They heard the hoarse voice of the Snow Man behind them calling to them to stop.

"What are you taking away my company for?" shouted the Snow Man. "Stop, stop!"

The wind was at the back of the Snow Man, and he came with tremendous

after Dame Louisa had set her bonnet on fire. "Do you feel as if you were thawing?" Dame Louisa asked the children, after they had left the Snow Man behind.

"Yes, ma'am," said they. Dame Louisa drove as fast as she could, with thankful tears running down her cheeks. "I've been a wicked, cross old woman," said she again and again, "and that is what blasted my Christmas trees."

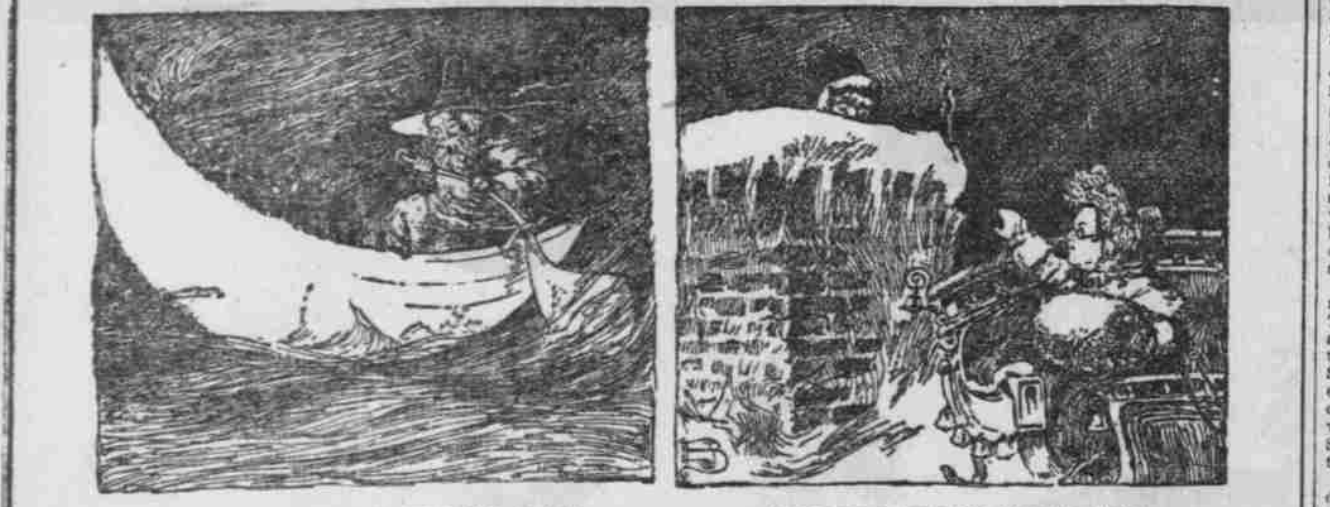
It was the dawn of Christmas Day when they came in sight of Dame Louisa's house.

they saw that it was true. Dame Louisa's barn and nobody had known it until she appeared on Christmas morning with her brood of silver chickens.

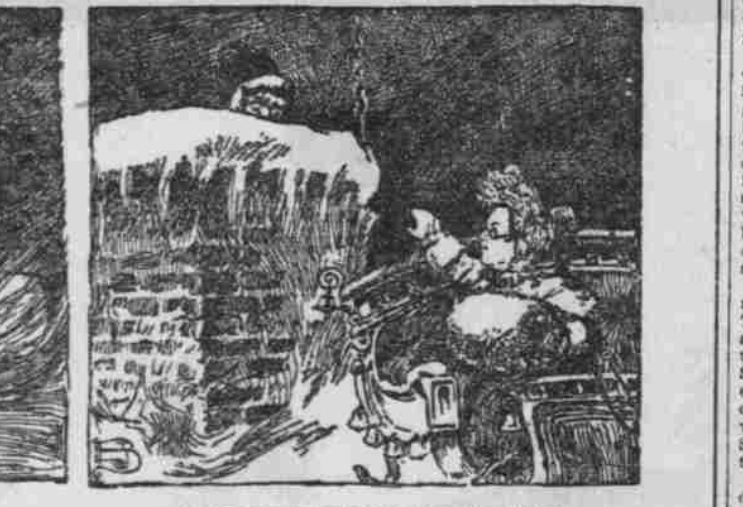
"Every scholar shall have one of the silver chickens for a Christmas present," said Dame Penny.

"And each shall have one of my Christmas trees," said Dame Louisa. Then all the scholars cried out with delight, the Christmas bells in the village began to ring, the sun shone brightly out and it was a merry Christmas Day.

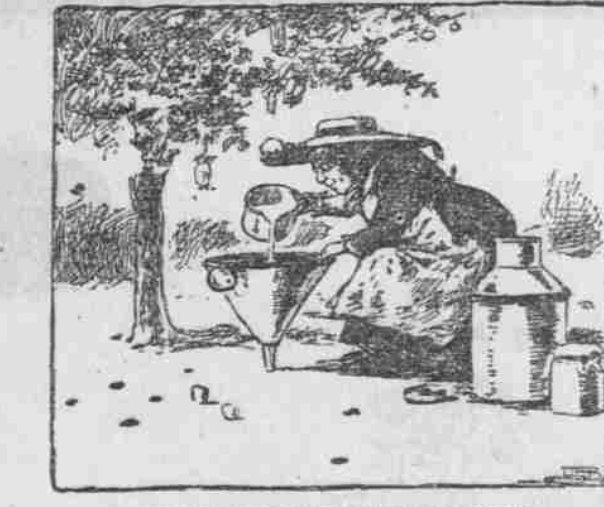
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GENTLE SAILOR, STEER HER, WIFE!



DON'T GET SMOTHERED IN THE BED!



FEEDING ROOTS WITH MILK AND HONEY.



I WILL KISS YOUR RUDDY CHEEK.



SANTA, must I tease in vain, dear? Let me go and hold the reindeer. While you clamber down the chimneys. Don't look savage as a Turk. Why should you have all the glory of the joyous Christmas story, and poor little Goody Santa Claus have nothing but the work?

It would be so very cozy, and I, all round and rosy, looking like two loving snowballs in our fuzzy Arctic fur, tucked in warm and snug together, whisking through the winter weather. Where the twinkles of the sleighbells is the only sound that stirs. You just sit here and grow chubby off the goodies in my cubby from December to December, till your white beard sweeps your knees.

For you must allow, my Goodman, that you're but a lazy woodman. And rely on me to foster all our fruitful Christmas Trees. While your Sainthood waxes holy, year by year, and roly-poly. Blessed by all the lads and lassies in the limits of the land. While your toes at home you're toasting, then poor Goody must go posting. Out to plant and prune and garden, where our fir-tree forests stand.

Oh! but when the toll is sweet how I love our fir-tree forest. Heart of light and heart of beauty in the Northland cold and dim. And with gifts and candles laden to delight a boy or maiden. And its dark green branches ever murmuring the Christmas hymn! Yet ask Jack Frost, our neighbor, who but Goody has the labor. Feeding roots with milk and honey that the bonbons may be sweet. Who but Goody knows the reason why the playthings bloom in season. From the time the dollies budded, wry-boned and sawdust-blooded. With their waxen eyelids winking when the wind the tree-tops plied. And the rippling toys and trinkets rattle gaily to her feet! Have I, seated for a minute, until now your pack has in it? All the bright, abundant harvest of the merry Christmaside? Santa, wouldn't it be pleasant to surprise me with a present? And this ride behind the reindeer is the gift you've Goody begs; Think how hard my extra work is, tending the Thanksgiving turkeys. And our flock of rainbow chickens—those that lay the Easter-eggs.

Home to womanhood is suited? Nonsense, Goodman! Let our orchards answer for the value of a woman out-of-doors. Why then bid me cease the thunder, while the roof you're safely under. All to fashion firecrackers with the lightning in their course? See! I've fetched my snowflake bonnet, with the auriferous ribbons on it. I've not worn it since we fled from Fairyland our wedding day; How we sped through iceberg porches with the Northern Lights for torches! You were young and slender, Santa, and we had this very sleigh. Jump in quick, then! That's my bonny. Hey down derry; nonny nonny! While I tie your fur cap closer, I will kiss your ruddy chin. I'm so pleased I fall to singing just as sleigh-bells take to singing! Are the cloud-guns approxed ready? Tira-tira! tuck me in. Off across the starlight Northland, where no plant adorns the moonland. Save the ruby-berried holly and the frolic mistletoe! Oh! but this is Christmas revel. Off across the frosted level. Where the reindeer's hoofs strike sparks from the crisp, crackling snow! There's the Man in the Moon before us, bound to lead the Christmas show! With the music of the sky-waves rippling round his silver shell—Glimmering boat that leans and taries with the weight of dreams she carries. To the coats of happy children. Gentle sailor, steer her well!

Most Expensive Tree on Earth

THERE is a tree in Chesapeake, London, that may be described literally as the most expensive of its kind on earth. If \$5 gold pieces filled the entire trunk and bills fluttered in place of every one of the leaves, it would not buy the terra firma it occupies. For the land on which it stands, the northwest corner of Wood street and Chesapeake, is worth \$400 an acre. The tree has stood on this spot for more than 300 years, while its site has augmented in value to almost fabulous proportions.

ordered to lop off certain limbs of the tree which hung over Chesapeake. It was done, but the life of the tree, and with the consent of the parish clerk and church wardens of St. Peter's, Chesapeake, the ancient little Norman church at Foster Lane, nearby, to guard this tree from the vandals' clutches. When the men began to work on the tree, however, it created a big sensation in Chesapeake. They are chopping down our tree," went up from a thousand angry throats in the district. Police were called and doubtless there would have been another shower of writs, injunctions and proceedings had not the minister of the parish explained the real reason for the pruning operations.

Another almost impassable barrier which protects the tree in its position is the fact that it grows in sacred ground. There is a law in London that no building can be erected on sacred ground without special act of Parliament, and were the unhappy man who dares to put up even a shanty within the precincts of a graveyard in England.

This particular corner of Chesapeake has been immortalized by Wordsworth: "At the corner of Wood street when daylight appears, There's a thorn that sings loud; It has sung for three years."

This bird was wont to perch in the now famous tree and it attracted the attention of Wordsworth, who used to breakfast in a little shop nearby. As far back as the year 1392—just a hundred years before Mr. Columbus discovered America—another tree stood in this graveyard, and was spoken of by Chaucer: "That whosoever ploweth it away He shall have Chryppis' curse for aye." This tree, therefore, is a direct descendant of perhaps the oldest tree on record in England, and it may almost be described as an English institution.

This particular corner of Chesapeake is back of the general postoffice.—Star.

Christmas Jay
by Susan Folsom

THE Christmas chimes are peeping high Beneath the solemn Christmas sky, And blowing winds their notes prolong Like echoes from an angel's song; Good will and peace, peace and good will Ring out the carols glad and gay, Telling the heavenly message still, That Christ the Child was born today.

In lovely hut and palace-hall Present and king-king festival, And childhood wrens a fainful guile, And tender doves all mother-eyes, The aged man forgets his years, The thoughtful heart is doubly gay, The sad are cheered of fair tears, For Christ the Lord was born today.

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