

THE HAPPY NEW YEAR.



HE chill air is crisp,
for the frost king
displays
His tiny ice spears,
which he hangs
on the trees.
No fragrance of sum-
mer, no petal of
rose,
To brush as we
pass; we see only
dead leaves.
No w— dear merry
Christmas, has a
swiftly departed.
A New Year stands
seanning the
ghosts of the
past.
We gaze o'er his
shoulders, and
feel heavy-heart-
ed
To think months and seasons are fading
so fast.

See, whirled in midair are white snowflakes
descending!
Each flake seems a spirit dropped down
from above,
As though for the New Year to earth they
come, lending
A promise of purity, blessing and love.
The fall trumpet creeper, whose scarlet
tipped flowers
Last summer made gay its beautiful dress,
Stood yesterday drooping and leafless for
hours.
Now, snowclad, it gleams in renewed love-
liness.

How they pile, how they gather, the snows
in their whiteness,
Fed onward by silence, who moves with-
out sound!
Their feet shod in crystal and sparkling in
brightness,
They drape frosty venture o'er tree, bush
and ground.
No thought with the summer all beauty was
dying;
We thought with the old year all joy flown
away.
But spirits of snow to our shorn world came
flying,
And the New Year has blessings perhaps
for each day.

Hark! Will bells be ringing! Yes, joy bells
are ringing.
Out welcomes of gladness to another New Year.
May each moment be crowded with laughter
and singing,
And during its stay may no sorrow draw
near.
Ring on, New Year bells! Let thy ringing
mean gladness!
Ring all its away, but ring love's warmth
within!
Though the old year just died, and we saw
it with sadness,
Yet happy may prove the New Year we
begin!
—Christian Intelligencer.

A CHRISTMAS REUNION.



It was Nell who thought of it first. But about all of the clever ideas in our family had their origin in Nell's fertile imagination. Brother Tom often told her that she ought to put a card in the window and in the papers offering "Ideas for Sale." Nell was grandfather's favorite and she was very fond of him. One day she evolved this idea and laid it on the family altar at a discussion we were having regarding the approaching Christmas festivities.



"THEY'RE ALL COMING, TOM."

I've just thought out the loveliest scheme for grandpa's enjoyment. You know that he hasn't seen one of his brothers for a long time, and it's twenty years since he saw our Uncle Henry. Now, can't we get up a great family reunion as a surprise for grandpa? Uncle Henry could come here in a day.

"He's nearly 80," I said.

"I know, but he is stronger than most men of 70. Uncle Harvey, who is only 73, could come in a day and a night, and Uncle Joel could come in ten hours. I think that it would be just lovely to see those four dear old souls, all over 70, together, and to hear them tell tales of their childhood and boyhood."

After imposing solemn vows of secrecy on all of us, Nell ran off to her writing desk to write letters to grandpa's three old brothers and to her sister Ann. A week later she met me at the door when I went home to dinner and said gleefully: "They're all coming, Tom! I've had letter to-day from every one of them! And grandpa said at luncheon that he'd give a good deal to see 'the boys,' as he called them. He wanted to know if I'd go with him if he went to visit them all in the spring. I could just hug myself for thinking up the whole scheme."

Each of my great uncles arrived on the day before Christmas, and grandpa's surprise was complete. He showed no signs of needing Nell's smelling salts, although he was visibly affected when his aged brother Henry arrived and they clasped hands after a separation of twenty years. "You've grown old, Hiram," quavered out Uncle Henry. "Seems to me ye look 'bout as old as I do."

"Oh, I guess not, Henry; I guess not," said grandpa, a trifle stiffly, for he was sensitive regarding his age.

"Don't he, boys?" said Uncle Henry, appealing to two white-haired brothers. "I bet I could fetch ye to the ground first in a rattle, that is if ye rattled fair,

which ye didn't used to do when we was all boys together. Why, I'm hanged if Hiram don't part his hair, or what he's got left of it, in the middle yet. I reckoned you'd git over that when ye came to havin' one foot in the grave and t'other one no business out."

Grandpa flushed and said coldly: "The combing of one's hair is simply a matter of individual taste, Henry."

Nell hurried Uncle Henry off to show him his room, and grandpa said to Uncle Joel:

"You hear your years well, Joel. One would hardly guess you to be six years older than I."

"No, Hiram, they wouldn't. One thing, I'm a good deal fleshier 'n you. I'm kind o' sprised to see you so kind o' all skin and bone."

"Come, now, I ain't quite that, Joel. I weigh 120."

"Is that all; why, Hi, I weigh 178 and—"

"Come, Uncle Joel, I want to show you some of the family portraits in the parlor," said Madge, noting grandpa's rising color. This left Uncle Harvey and grandpa together.

"Joel and Henry were always unnecessarily blunt in their speech," said grandpa.

"Yes, but they gen'ally hit the nail on the head," said Uncle Harvey. "You do look as if the wind would blow you away, Hiram, and I notice you've a kind of limp in your gait."

"I've nothing of the sort, Harvey Myler, and I ain't more than two-thirds as bald as you are and not half so gray."

"Oh, you ain't; I'll count gray hairs with you any time, and I'll bet you a jews-harp that—"

"Come, Uncle Harvey," I said, "let us go to the stable. I want you to give me your opinion of a horse I've just bought."

The combined efforts of Madge and Nell and I sufficed to maintain peace at the dinner table. We kept up such a rattling fire of conversation that the four brothers had hardly a chance to speak to each other. We saw grandpa wince when Uncle Henry ate his mashed potatoes with his knife, and we knew the full extent of our grandpa's agony when Uncle Joel poured his coffee into his saucer and blew it before drinking it. Uncle Harvey spoke but once, but that was once too often, for he said, explosively:

"Oh, I say, boys, do you remember that Sary Jane Skimmerhorn Hi used to be so sweet on when we all went to the Hopvine school? You 'member how he used to kiss 'er there at the end of the lane? Well, she's livin' yet, an' I'd give a deal to see Hi kiss 'er now. She weighs 329 pounds and has a beard that Tom here might be proud of, an' she's had fifteen children an' they're all livin'." I was just thinkin' what if Hi had married 'er as he used to swear he would! Eh, Hi?"

Uncle Henry and Joel roared with laughter and Joel choked on a mouthful of coffee. Grandpa turned pale and it required all of Nell's cleverness to prevent a scene.

All of the cousins and uncles and aunts in the city had been invited to come in that evening to enjoy a Christmas eve reunion of the family and to be entertained with family reminiscences by the four old and rennited brothers. At 8 o'clock we gathered around a great open fire to hear our aged relatives "reminis," as Madge mischievously put it.

"Tell us all about when you were boys together," said Cousin Ned Drayton. "I guess there wasn't much time nor money wasted celebrating Christmas when you were boys."

"Well, I guess there wa'n't," said Uncle Joel. "I guess—O, say, boys, do you remember that Christmas we four boys went bear hunting back there in the Maine woods when we wa'n't none of us fully grown?"

"I remember it as well as if it was yesterday," said Uncle Henry. "I remember jist how that b'ar squealed when I shot 'im."

"You still stick to it that you shot 'im, Henry," said Uncle Joel, "an' I am as sure as I'm livin' that it was my shot that fetched 'im."

"In a horn it was!" said Uncle Henry, testily. "Your bullet went clear over the b'ar and lodged in that big pine we found with a bullet hole in it."

"There's no use in Henry an' Joel spatin' so about which killed that b'ar," put in Uncle Harvey, "for I've an idee the beast would have got up an' walked off with both your bullets. It was my knife thrust that finished the beast."

"Yes, it was!" sneered Joel. "Oh, yes; to be sure it was," snorted Uncle Henry. "I guess that the blows I rained down on the beast's head with the club I carried, had something to do with finishing him," said grandpa, calmly.

"Well, ye ain't got over drawin' on your imagination for facts, hev ye, Hi?" said Uncle Henry. "The rest of us kin remember how ye hid in the bresh tremblin' an' bellerin' until we was almost ready to skin the bear an' then you come out with your little club and give the beast a whack or two."

"Henry Myler, that is not true!"

"I tell ye I killed that bear myself!"

"Ye didn't!"

"I know I did!"

"My club counted for more than—"

"Your club! Pooh!"

"Now, Henry, I won't stand it to—"

"I'd like to see ye help yourself."

"Shet up, all of ye, for I—"

"If it ain't I'll eat my hat!"

"I clubbed the life out of him," said grandpa.

"I tell ye I killed that bear myself!"

"Ye didn't!"

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THE event which Christmas commemorates possesses for humanity the deepest meaning. Compared with its profound importance all other events, or indeed the sum of all other events, sink into insignificance, and the great institution of which that event is the foundation-stone has from a very early date observed it with ceremonies of fitting stateliness and reverence. But the note of even the sacred celebration of the birthday of the Saviour has for centuries been one of joyfulness and glad praise. It is the one day of all the year when the whole Christian world puts into practice the cardinal law of Christ. The sternest, hardest and most worldly man pauses in his planning and grinding, and for a day at least allows his thoughts to dwell on projects for making other people glad. The Christmas-tide festival is the special season for renewing the manifestation of those family affections that are not dead but merely dulled by routine and familiarity. The head of the household, who spends hundreds of dollars in providing the necessities of life for his flock without an emotion other than an occasional thought of what a tax upon his income it is, has his whole being stirred up as the result of the expenditure of a few dollars in rattles and trinkets. A sense of his blessings thrusts itself on his attention. A realization of the patient, heroic performance from day to day, year in and year out, of the unheroic, uneventful, tedious and multiplied duties of the helpmeet and mother rushes on his mind, together with an uneasy knowledge of his frequent forgetfulness of it. She is

GRANDMOTHER UNDER THE MISTLETOE.



the angel of his threshold, and he turns to the heaven that seems so far away in his business hours, but now seems so near and powerful, as he asks for its blessing on the little brood that clusters about her knee.

For Christmas is essentially the children's day. Its specially religious significance can of course never be lost, but it is doubtful if its spiritual influence would be so widespread but for the myth of Kris Kringle. With its dawning faculties the child learns of the wonderful little man with the queer, tufty coat and rubicund face, whose advent on one particular night in the year is the most extraordinary event in existence, and when the revolution of many yuletides has turned reality into myth the disillusioned one enjoys at least half his earlier delights in witnessing another generation of Kris Kringle's little subjects enjoying that monarch's season of blissful lordship. In millions of homes the same picture is seen. Day breaking through the frosted pane, and on the dim stairs tiny white-robed figures stealing down the creaking steps. Eyes are dancing with anticipation and apprehension, for there is something uncanny about this dear old king of theirs, and mother has to take up the rear in similar white-robed dishabille to inspire confidence in those little throbbing hearts. And when the chimney-nook is safely gained, what clamor, what pounding of drums and blowing of horns; what joy that the funny, fat, good-natured old gentleman is still alive and looking after his own. May every home in Christendom see this picture.

"Don't ye tell me to shet up!"

The dispute waxed hot and hotter until Madge got Uncle Henry off to his room, and Nell had done the same service for Uncle Harvey, while I dragged Uncle Joel away for a smoke with me in my own room, where he berated his brothers fearfully. Grandpa stalked off to his own room.

We managed to keep the four old hot heads from getting into a row on Christmas, but Uncle Henry and grandpa did not speak to each other all day, and to tell the unvarnished truth there was great inward rejoicing when our three dear old

uncles departed. Uncle Henry thrust his head out of the carriage door and screeched out at the last second:

"I did kill that bear!"

"You never!" called out grandpa, sharply from the stoop, and they never saw each other again.

"I admit that my dear little scheme failed," said Nell, when we were alone together. "The next time I bring four old gentlemen together for a Christmas reunion I'll select deaf and dumb men, or mer who haven't quite so much dynamite and chain lightning and undimmed pugilistic vigor in their make-up. I positive-

ly believe that Uncle Henry would have trounced grandpa if he'd stayed another day."—Utica Globe.

Thrice Happy.

He was a little ragged wail living in a village of southern Kentucky. A stranger to actual comfort, it is not to be supposed that he was very familiar with pleasures of life. One Christmas eve he was standing before a shop window with his lean little face pressed against the pane, devouring with hungry eyes a beautiful display within.

There was a lady in the shop, engaged in purchasing gifts for her nieces and nephews. She saw the wretched window—ragged, half-clad, and without doubt half-starved as well.

"Prudence," said she, in speaking of the matter afterward, "might have suggested food and clothes. But another idea taken possession of me. I determined then and there that that boy should know the blessedness of happy childhood for Christmas at all events."

On the impulse she called him in. To a wagon, an iron horse with a flying driver madly sounding a fire alarm, a drum with glided sticks, a tin horn, a pack of firecrackers, things which his poor, blinded eyes had never before looked upon in the light of real possession, were put into his hands.

"There was a kind of awe in his earnest eyes," said the lady, "as the joy of possession had stricken him dumb."

"It was the day after Christmas that came upon him again, hanging about the streets with that same old look of a beggar about him. That is, in all but his eyes; they, I think, were never quite the same again. They fairly shone when I lifted them to my face in recognition. 'Good morning, Joe,' said I. 'What have you done with your toys?'

"Imagine my surprise when he said, 'give 'em to Jack Parker, the colored boy over yonder to Scruff Town.'

"What?" said I, "you have given them all away? All your beautiful toys?"

"Yes, I have," said he, "and I'm

thrice happy."

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"Yes, I am," said he, "and I'm

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