

IN ICELAND'S

There's going to be a railroad up in Iceland.
And what a funny railroad it will be! I would never think of Iceland as a nice land.
A nice land.
For week ends at a cottage by the sea. For the trains will very likely go on runners like a sleigh.
And they'll harness up the engine in a jingle bells array.
At least, I can't imagine it in any other way.
In Iceland.
For won't need your thermometers in Iceland.
In Iceland.
And you won't have any fretful via a via: For up there in that anything but spice land.
But spice land.
The cars are always cold as they can be. Oh, they'll have to dig the sleepers out a dozen times a day.
Or perhaps they'll tunnel through the great big icebergs in the bay.
And that will be just bully till the icebergs move away.
In Iceland.
A journey will be jolly up in Iceland.
In Iceland.
The scenery's so wonderful to see; It will seem like nothing short of paradise land.
Paradise land.
As the open cars go whirling over the ice. They won't have any schedule so there'll never be delay.
The rates will be so low that almost anyone can pay.
For in that curious climate it is Christmas every day.
In Iceland.

Little Baby Beth

By Caroline H. Stanley.

IT was New Year's eve. Downstairs in the parlor was Baby Beth's Christmas tree, just as it had been arranged a week ago—bisque doll, toys, glittering balls, marvelous sugar dogs and bears and "elephants," candy apples and hearts, popcorn, colored tapers just ready to be lighted—and upstairs Baby Beth was dying. All week long, with the fierceness of a tigress fighting for her young, Margaret Thorne had fought for her child's life. From the moment that the first hoarse cough smote upon her ear and Beth had said, "Mamma, it hurts me here when I toff," she had lost no time. All that doctors, nurses, servants, friends—mother love—could do had been done, and now in her darkened chamber the mother sat with her baby on her knees and waited. Toward night a change had come. The harsh cough ceased, the panting breath came more quietly.
"Didn't she seem easier?" she had asked, and the doctor had answered briefly, "Yes." Then, after an interval of waiting, "Wasn't her breathing less labored?" The doctor made no reply.
"Doctor," piteously, "don't you think she is better?"
Dr. Lemoyne turned away. He had practiced many years, and witnessed many a scene like this, but to his kind heart each one was new.
"My child," he said, "she will never be any better—she is dying."
Margaret Thorne made no outcry, shed no tear—she would have "to-morrow and all after life for tears," to-day she had—her baby. She bent over the child and half stretched out her arms with the impulse to take her and go somewhere—anywhere—away from everybody. It was the instinct of the wounded animal. Then she fell into the monotonous swinging motion of the knees, familiar to mothers, patting her little one softly the while as if she were putting her to sleep.
It was heart-breaking. The women to whom the child was only a dear little baby who "would be better off in heaven," as the phrase goes, crept about the room weeping softly with aching hearts. After a time Margaret looked up.
"Doctor," she asked, "how long?"
"I can hardly tell," he answered, "but only a few hours at best, I think."
She turned to the women.
"Send for her father," she said briefly.
There was a slight stir of surprise. Significant glances passed from one to another behind her bowed head. Then they went out to do her bidding.
The message was quickly sent and as quickly answered. The case brooked no delay. Margaret Thorne heard the familiar step in the hall, then in the room below. A moment later he came in. The women spoke to him in the sympathetic key of the sick room and the doctor silently wrung his hand. Margaret looked up with a slight movement of the head, but did not offer him her hand.
"Margaret," he said, "it was very good of you to send for me."
"It was only right," she said, her voice hardening in her efforts to steady it; "she is your child, too."
He made no effort at conversation, and so they sat, the silence of death upon them. It grew oppressive. The women, one by one, stole out of the room, and the doctor finally muttered something about going into the library to lie down, telling them to call him if there should be any change. The two were left alone with the dying child.
It was a strange scene. Each held a baby hand; each with a burden of grief unutterable bent over the little form and watched the flickering life go out; and each shut up and double-locked and bolted the heart that the other should not know what was therein. They were but a hand's breadth apart, but between them was a great gulf fixed.
John Thorne had not seen his child since that never-to-be-forgotten day when he gave her and his home into Margaret's hands and went forth alone. How he had longed for a sight of the baby face. For a touch of the baby hands, none but himself would ever know. But he had been too proud to ask to see her, and Margaret had said in bitter scorn, "It is the way of the sex. A woman would never have forgotten her own child." And she had clasped Beth passionately to her

heart and cried out, "I will be father and mother both to you, my baby, my poor, forsaken baby."
As he bent over her now, all his heart in his eyes, a strange feeling of doubt began tugging at her heart. Had he really loved the child like this? Uncomfortable regrets took possession of her. Could she have misjudged him? She might have sent Beth to see him occasionally, it seemed to her now, when she had her all the time. He had been more generous than she.
She glanced furtively at him. He rested his head on his right hand, his left clasping Beth's. His eyes were fixed on the child as if he would in these few moments left feast his famished heart upon that which had been so long withheld. Something in his position made Margaret think of one other night when they had sat like this and watched Beth through the croup, and how they had felt that if God would only spare her they could have nothing in life to trouble them again. How gentle and tender John had been that night!
And then there was the time that Beth was burned and John had walked with her the whole night long and would not even let the mother rest him, because "she was weak and he was strong," he had said. How the memories came thronging upon her! Oh, if she could only wake and find that this year had been a dream—a horrible dream—and there had been no quarrel!
The clock ticked on, the fire sputtered fitfully, but the silence of the vigil was unbroken. John Thorne raised his head and looked at Margaret as she lay with closed eyes. Her white, suffering face touched his heart. How much older she looked. It was only four years since she had stood a bride of nineteen and given herself to him. Why, could it be only four years? It seemed like an eternity.
The breath comes slowly. The little hands are very still, and yet, O baby fingers, through the solemn watches of this night, thout gathering up the tangled, broken threads of these two lives,

LET'S KEEP SANTA CLAUS.
Memory of Happy Days of Long Ago Protects St. Nick.
THE memory of happy days long ago should ever protect Santa Claus. When your boy looks you squarely in the eye and says: "Papa, Clarence Mettuff said there isn't any Santa Claus and I punched him, for I know there is," what are you going to do? Forgive the blow and cling to a happy myth or destroy your boy's faith in Santa Claus, and, incidentally in a good many other things he believes in, but doesn't understand?
"Why discuss the matter at all?" is a natural question. Because it is a question that always arises at Christmas time. An Eastern preacher is discussing it from the pulpit and holds that deceit is sin and that the truth and only the truth is the best steady diet for both young and old.
The man or woman who would take from a child his sublime faith in a Mysterious Being, who rewards all the good children and skips the bad ones on his annual tour of countless chimneys, has a shriveled heart. We want more happiness; not less. We need more good influences in the lives of our children, not fewer. Nothing but good ever came from the Santa Claus Myth. He is a glorious ghost, a delicious impossibility, is this friend of the children. He teaches kindness, charity, goodness. He inspires and encourages. He brightens the lives of millions of little ones with the joy of anticipation and the gladness of receiving. He is a companion of brownies and elves and fairies, and flowers that speak.
When we abolish Merry Old St. Nick let's burn all the story books, the fairy

eighty feet high to be erected on a mountain. It was lighted during New Year's night, and the illumination was seen for hundreds of miles, eclipsing the light of the moon. This candle tree is no longer lighted in China, being replaced by an unusual number of lanterns, which are hung everywhere. A suggestion of the tree, however, still survives in Japan. At the New Year two evergreen trees are placed without, on either side of the door. Their tops are tied together with the sacred band of straw, and various objects, dried lobsters and oranges are fastened to their branches.—Woman's Home Companion.
CHRISTMAS IN DIXIE.
A Quaint Custom the Survival of Slavery Days.
In some parts of the South, notably Alabama, the observance of Christmas is kept up after the manner of slavery days. Two weeks before the festival brawny colored men in the employ of the plantation owner search out a timber tract, fell the tree of greatest size, cut off the trunk where the circumference is greatest, big enough to admit of it filling the space of the open hearth, fasten heavy chains to it by driving in spikes, haul it to the nearest river or pond, sink it and anchor it well below the surface. On Christmas eve it is drawn up, taken to the owner's mansion and in the presence of his family, relatives and friends the dripping log is placed on a roaring fire in the hearth. To reduce the water-soaked wood to ashes is a slow process and sometimes a week elapses before this is accomplished. In the meantime the plantation dardies do not work while the incineration is in progress. On Christmas eve the hostess serves the company with eggnog and she supplies them with eatables while the log sizzles in the fire place. The banjo and guitar are brought into play and the old melodies are sung and fiddle and other dances are gone through with zest. The white folks take a hand in the fun making, too, and with song and story make

CHRISTMAS BELLS.
Ring out in joy, O chiming bells!
For in your melody there dwells
The music glad of Christmas tide,
On every hearthstone far and wide.
And rose lips, with laughter sweet,
The happy songs of life repeat—
Ring out in joy!
Ring out in hope, O chiming bells!
For your clear voice of patience tells
To waiting hearts who promise yields
No golden fruit of harvest fields,
Whose garnered grain of tolling hand
Lies heaped upon a barren land—
Ring out in hope!
Ring out in grief, O chiming bells!
For in your trembling echo dwells
To saddened hearts a thought of old,
A picture framed in memory's gold,
A vanished face beneath the snow,
A dream of life's sweet long ago—
Ring out in grief!
Ring out in cheer, O chiming bells!
For in your peals a promise dwells
To listening hearts that strive to hear
The future voice of hope and cheer;
For love and joy will have their birth
As snowdrops spring from icy earth—
Ring out in cheer!
Ring out in peace, O chiming bells!
For Christmas-tide a message tells
To eager souls that bravely wait,
And loyal hearts too strong for fate
To crush to earth—oh, listen, then:
'Tis "Peace on earth, good will to men!"—
Ring out in peace!
—Clara Lee Puckette, in Washington Post.



In the darkness ahead there were occasional flares of red flames, and from them ascended long, comet-like tracks of light that flashed into momentary blazes. The boom of the cannon, the wail shrieking of the shells and their sharp explosion blended in one wild devil's concert.
The boy from Maine drew back quickly from the muzzle of the starboard gun No. 1 of the United States gunboat Mackinaw. The old gunner standing rigid drew the lanyard toward himself with a sudden jerk. There was a deafening roar and a cloud of choking smoke enveloped the gun crew. Another shell had been sent into the solid earthworks of Fort Fisher.
The boy from Maine rushed forward through the smoke and thrust the cleaning rod into the muzzle of the gun. Another of the crew dashed a pailful of water over the long steel tube. The gun was reloaded and another shell was hurried at the spurts of flame ahead. They had been doing this at intervals since the early afternoon, and now it was almost midnight—midnight of Christmas eve, 1864.
"Cease firing," came a hoarse order out of the dark. The gun crew of No. 1 flung themselves down on the sloppy deck with audible sighs of relief. The devil's concert did not abate noticeably. The remaining vessels of the Federal fleet were still exchanging compliments with Fort Fisher.
The old gunner quickly filled his pipe, and the glow from the bowl half illuminated his wrinkled face now and then.
"Put's me in mind of a Christmas eve I spent at the mines in California," he remarked, "only it's just a mite worse."
"Don't talk about Christmas," said one of the crew in a husky voice. "I left three children at home. They are in bed now and three little stockings are hanging above the fireplace same as always, I hope. The wife is sitting up a while maybe, a thinking of me or maybe saying a bit of a prayer. Don't like to think of it when things are so dubious. What are you thinking about, Fritz?"
"Of the Vaterland—some," replied an unmistakable accent. "Vat is the matter mit the boy? He is always talking before."
The boy heard nothing. He sprawled on the deck with his head on one arm. The smell of the pine trees and the odor of boiling maple sap was in his nostrils. He was many hundreds of miles away from the Mackinaw, off Fort Fisher, back in the Maine woods with a sugaring party. The smoke of the pine-knot fire was rising slowly and the golden brown syrup hissed and bubbled in the kettles. Merry little shrieks of laughter rang in his ears. She was there, the pink and white of her face so prettily emphasized by the milk tippet. How absurdly small those little red mittens seemed in comparison with his! How blue her eyes were! There was no one looking—just one kiss on those lips created solely for the purpose—
"Starboard batteries commence firing!" came the hoarse and relentless order from the darkness.
A none too gentle kick brought the boy back to the Mackinaw, but her face looked at him for an instant out of the gloom. Starboard gun No. 1 again added its voice to the devil's chorus.
The sky began to turn from black to gray. "A Christmas present," said the gunner grimly as he jerked the lanyard.

The Mystic Mistletoe.
For many generations after the last Druid was dust the mistletoe had its votaries. The plant had almost every medicinal property, according to early physicians. It was believed to be a remedy for all ills, physical, mental and sentimental. In pagan days it was dedicated to Oswen, the Celtic Venus, and through the ages the plant and the tender passion were rather intimately entwined, says the Cincinnati Enquirer. Kissing beneath it began so far back in history that no one has ever attempted to trace the custom to its youth.
Johnny's Suggestion.
Johnny (on Christmas eve)—Mamma, can't you give the baby something to make him sleep to-night?
Mamma—Why, Johnny?
Johnny—Because if Santa Claus hears him yelling, he might think we're all just as bad.—Current Literature.
Jumping at a Conclusion.
Tommy—Santa Claus is coming to dinner to-night.
Elsie—Oh! How do you know?
Tommy—Ma told me a white-haired old gentleman was coming and we'd have to be very good.
Vanishing Pomp.
How worldly pride kin pass away,
I's takin' for my text.
What is a Christmas tree one day
Is kinidin' wood de nex?
—Washington Star.

RAM'S HORN BLASTS.
Warning Notes Calling the Wicked to Repentance.
LIVING is the only way of learning to live.
The fool sacrifices his wisdom to his wit.
Wandering never finds any terminus but woe.
Raising the wind often reaps the whirlwind.
The torch of truth must be fed by the heart.
Only in ministry is the secret of manhood.
Winds of flattery waft no one to the skies.
All things must depend on the things within.
If your goodness is goody-goody, it is no good.
The impact of your life will depend on its uplift.
You cannot save souls unless you sow yourself.
Many a little obedience has led to a large blessing.
If you really love your Lord you will never be lonely.
You do not rise in the world by giving yourself airs.
The uphill road always looks steeper until you are on it.
It is your motive that gives moral value to your money.
Praying for calm is not the best way to prepare for storm.
It takes more than a melting mood to soften a hard heart.
No great work was ever done without the shedding of blood.
It's easy to shut your eyes and talk of a world where there is no God.
Jesus becomes Christ and Lord only as He becomes central in all our living.
The brightness of your crown does not depend on the darkness of your frown.
Everyday goodness in living is the best commentary on the law and the Gospel.
HIS TWIN GIRLS.
How Two Boyish Names Were Corrupted Into Feminine.
When, after the successive advent of four daughters, twin sons were born to Professor Shawe of Canby Academy, he was a proud father indeed. The two sturdy babies received the names of Darius and Richard, which the professor explained to his friends were good names, historic names and family names all at once, and had besides the advantage of suggesting good nicknames or none—a thing always worth considering in the naming of boys.
If Richard should become Dick, why, Dick was as satisfactory as Richard; and Darius probably would retain its classic entirety, but if it did not what could it become but Dare? Dick and Dare—could there be more manly, attractive, picturesque nicknames for a pair of fine boys?
Alas for the good professor's hopes! It is as impossible to calculate what nickname his mates will bestow on a small boy as where lightning will strike.
Richard did not become Dick nor Darius Dare. A big boy at school promptly discovered that Richard Shawe suggested "Ricksshaw," which at last became Jimrickshaw, which in turn was cut down to Jimmy—and remained there.
Equally unexpected was the fate of Darius. There was in the boys' class a girl much larger and older than he, named Maria, whose stupidity kept her with the little ones. Darius and Maria are names easily confused when quickly spoken, and the two were constantly answering the teacher in each other's stead. So perhaps it was merely natural that they should presently be known as Big Maria and Little Maria. "Little Maria" and "Jimmy" the professor's boys remained through primary, grammar and high school, and well into their college days. They accepted their feminine cognomens cheerfully enough; but it was long before their father became reconciled to the inquiry from teasing friends:
"Well, professor, and how are your twin girls to-day?"—Youth's Companion.
Mental Limitations.
"Your honor," said the arrested chauffeur. "I tried to warn the man, but the horn would not work."
"Then, why did you not slacken speed rather than run him down?"
A light seemed to dawn upon the prisoner.
"Gee!" he said, "that's one on me. I never thought of that."—Philadelphia Ledger.
We Want to Know, Too.
An inquirer asks the New York Sun: "What has become of the comets? Some twenty-five years ago there were whoopers on exhibit, or, at any rate, they seemed immense to my youthful eye. Are they out of fashion? Are more expected to put in an appearance at some future time? I should like to show a good specimen to my children."
Unexpected Settlement.
"Did the old man settle anything on his daughter and her husband when they married?"
"Yes, indeed, he did; he settled himself."—Baltimore American.
How policemen are abused! And did you ever know a policeman who wasn't a petty good fellow and anxious to do his duty? We never did.

First and Best of Christmas Stories

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.
And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.



And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.
And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.
And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.
And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.
But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.
And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, and it was told unto them.

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and with a touch no other hand might use, art weaving them together, deftly, surely, with heaven-sent skill!
There was a slight stir. The mother and father felt a quiver pass through the little form. With startled faces they bent over her. There was a gasp, a sudden throwing up of the little hands—then all was still.
In an instant his arms were around her, her head on his breast.
"Margaret, my wife!"
"O John, John!" she said.
The clock struck twelve. A New Year had dawned.
In the twilight of a summer day a man and woman stand beside a little grave. There is an air of subdued sadness about them that tells to whom the little mound belongs, and yet when they speak it is hopefully and cheerfully. It is a tiny grave—"only a baby," a stranger would say—but we who have stood beside such know that love and grief are not measured by feet and inches.
The glory of the setting sun fills the place. It lights up the faces of father and mother as they lay, with loving hands, forget-me-nots upon the green turf, and then, hand in hand, go forth. A stray sunbeam falls across the white stone. We stoop to read the inscription. It is a very simple one:
BABY BETH.
AGED THREE.
"And a little child shall lead them."
—The Housewife.
Tommy Got One.
Tommy (on Christmas morning)—Where does Santa Claus get all his stuff, mamma?
Mamma—Oh, he buys it.
Tommy—Well, he must be a jay to let anyone palm off a tin watch on him!
—Town Topics.

tales, and all the make-believes that wield an influence for good in the lives of children. But Santa Claus is in no danger, for if the children love him, so do the parents. Memory of happy days of long ago protects him. A century hence he will be making his rounds and laughing with the children, at a time when he would destroy him.—Cincinnati Post.
Strange Origin of Christmas Tree.
Most of us know that the Christmas tree comes to us direct from Germany. And we know of the tree worship of the Druids which obtained in England and France, and which probably had some influence on the later use of the tree in the Christian festival. But we do not all know that a similar festival with the tree as a crowning feature is observed among many heathen nations, and that it comes from sun worship, which is older than history. The revival of the sun after the winter solstice has ever been the subject of rejoicing and of celebration by ceremonies which represent the new light brought back to the world. Our tree, with its small candles, its gilded knickknacks and toys for the children, is a direct descendant of this old festival in honor of the sun.
Traces of it exist in Iceland, where the "service tree" is found adorned with burning lights during Christ's night. The English yule log is a faint survival of this festival. But it is beyond these that I wish to draw your attention, back farther even than the Druid mysteries of the Gallic forests. It is to China, that home of all wonders and of all history. It has been shown that as long ago as 247 B. C. a tree with a hundred lamps and flowers was placed on the steps of the audience hall. This appears again in the records of Princess Yang, who lived 713-755 A. D., and who caused a hundred-lamp tree

the colored folks happy. At some of these gatherings 300 persons take part, the old, capacious mansion giving ample room for all.
Carious Custom of Oxfordshire.
In some places in Oxfordshire, England, it was the right of every maid servant to ask the hired man for a bit of ivy to trim the house. If he turned a deaf ear to her importunities or forgot her request she would steal a pair of his breeches and nail them to the gate in the yard or on the highway. This was supposed to debar him from all privileges of the mistletoe.
Easy to Be Happy.
Mrs. Nexdoor—Aren't you always worried half to death when it comes to buying a Christmas present for your husband?
Mrs. Sunshine—Mr. no! I buy my husband something I want for myself, and he buys me something he wants for himself, and then we trade.
Blow the trumpet, beat the drum,
Glad am I that Santa's come!

