

THE HAPPY NEW YEAR.

HE chill air is crisp, for the frost king discloses His tiny ice spears, which he hangs on the trees. No fragrance of summer, no petals of roses, To brush as we pass; we see only dead leaves. Now, dear merry Christmas, has a swiftly departed. A New Year stands scanning the ghosts of the past. We gaze o'er his shoulders and feel heavy-hearted. 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, leading A promise of purity, blessing and love. The tall trumpet creeper, whose scarlet-tinged flowers Last summer made gay its beautiful dress, Stood yesterday drooping and leafless for hours. Now, snow-kissed, it gleams in renewed loveliness. How they pile, how they gather, the snows In their whiteness, who moves without sound! Their feet shod in crystal and sparkling in brightness. They drape frosty venture o'er tree, bush and ground. We thought with the summer all beauty was dying; But spirits of snow to our shorn world came flying. And the New Year has blessings perhaps for each day. Hark! Wild bells are ringing! Yes, joy bells are ringing Out welcomes of glee 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 his 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. "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



"THEY'RE ALL COMING, TOM."

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 L's 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 letters 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 bug 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 be, boys!" said Uncle Henry, appealing to his two white-haired brothers. "I bet I could fetch ye to the ground first in a rattle, that is if ye ratted fair, which ye didn't do to do when we was all boys together. Why, I've banged if Hiram don't part his hair, or w... he's got left of it, in the middle eye. I reckoned you'd get over that when ye came to havin' one foot in the grave and t'other one go 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 bear this, rear wall, 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 fiesher 'n you. I'm kind o' s'prised to see you so kind o' all skin and bone." "Come, now, I ain't quite that, Joel. I weigh 150." "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 jew-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' yit, 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 reunited 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 just 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 spatting 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 'im," 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 brush 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!" "If it ain't I'll eat my hat!" "I clubbed the life out of 'im," said grandpa. "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—"



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 dissemble 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.

lusive vigor in their make-up. I positively believe that Uncle Henry would have trounced grandpa if he'd strayed another day." -Utica Globe. Pappets Made of Gingerbread. The city of Amsterdam claims St. Nicholas as its patron saint, and during the first week of December confectioners' shops throughout the city display one special delicacy called "St. Nicholas cake," of which large quantities are sold at this season. "Men" and "women" made of this crisp, brown cake, or gingerbread, can be bought in different sizes and at all prices. These sweet creatures are often called "sweethearts" ("vrijers" we say in Dutch), and the girls receive a "man," the boys a "woman." I remember quite well what fun it used to be to hear the servant come in with: "If you please, ma'am, here is Miss Annie's sweetheart"—and hand a gingerbread man to my mother. Christmas Gifts for Men. It is a great relief to note that some philanthropic writers throughout the country are engaged in telling what sort of Christmas gifts men would like. The suggestions are not all successful, and they

of the presents they would find acceptable, with details concerning size, color and weight. The wife would simply have to join the bureau's subscribers, find her husband's list, borrow the money from him and give him a happy surprise on Christmas. This scheme is worth considering. It ought to take a great burden off the ladies' minds, anyhow.

Thrice Happy. He was a little ragged waif living in a village of southern Kentucky. A stranger to actual comfort, it is not to be supposed that he was very familiar with the 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 the beautiful display within. There was a lady in the shop, deeply engaged in purchasing gifts for her small nieces and nephews. She saw the waif at the 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 had taken possession of me. I determined then and there that that boy should know the blessedness of happy childhood for one Christmas at all events."

On the impulse she called him in. Toys, a wagon, an iron horse with a flying driver madly sounding a fire alarm, a drum with gilded sticks, a tin horn, a pack of firecrackers, things which his poverty-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 solemn, earnest eyes," said the lady, "as though the joy of possession had stricken him dumb. "It was the day after Christmas that I 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 he lifted them to my face in recognition.

ACROSS THE STREET.

The Change that Came with Another Christmas Time. AST Christmas the street across the house was the brightest and gayest of any in the block. There were beautiful Christmas wreaths every window the whole house was aglow. The shades were thrown high and the soft lace curtains parted wide. The tree in the great parlor of the house across the street was larger and had costlier presents on it than any other tree in the town. And most of the presents were for the little girl in the white dress and the big pink shawl who could seen from the street dancing around the tree, the happiest, sweetest little maid in all the world and the light and life and joy of the house across the street. This Christmas time all is dark and silent and gloomy in the great house across the street. There are no Christmas wreaths in the windows, no ray of light comes from behind the closed drawn blinds, no childish voice is heard within the house. There is no bright and beautiful tree, but on the spot on which the tree stood last year there is something white and as beautiful in its satin and velvet finish as the skill and wealth of man can make it. But the sight of it brought a chill to the hearts of the who saw it carried into the house Christmas eve, and when the eyes of the mother and father fell upon it their hearts bled anew. The passersby who saw the bands white fluttering from the knob of the door of the house across the street went on their own humbler houses thanking God that their own little ones were left to them, no matter how little of wealth beauty there might be in their homes. The poorest house in which there was the laugh of children was so much less desolate than the great mansion across the street in which the child's laugh was forever still. It added to the melody Paradise that Christmas morning rang out clear and sweet across the gulf of sea. It had gone through the Gate Beautiful and into a house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.

Christmas Carols.

Christmas gifts of coal and flour are in order all this month.—Philadelphia Ledger. That man never lived who had any influence over his wife the week before Christmas.—Atchison Globe. Small boys with an eye to the future are willing to wear stockings many sizes too big for them.—Philadelphia Record. Buy up the Christmas books liberal and next year the authors will get royalties enough to dine at a restaurant.—Atlanta Constitution. People with bad habits might ease on them a little before New Year's the purpose of learning whether it will pay to swear off.—Cedar Rapids Gazette. If you want to give a man a Christmas present that will please him give him a right to act as he pleases about the holiday. Nine men out of ten are blackened into buying Christmas presents, in one way or another.—Atchison Globe. "What shall I order for dinner to-day love?" asked Eve, as she absent-mindedly plucked a green apple. "Oh, any old thing retored Adam, wearily, "as long as isn't a spare rib. I'm sick of spare ribs. He savagely swatted a rock at a gar snake.—New York Press. Wife—I think I will surprise you with the purchase of a watch to wear Christmas. Husband—It will be an acceptable gift, and I shall wear it with pleasure. Wife—Oh, but the one I shall buy will be a lady's watch, suitable for me carry.—Boston Budget. Her father had said it could never be. They both sat in the parlor—also in tea. After long searching and a desperate effort she found her voice. "Oh, Charles, if we must part, let us wait till after Christmas!"—Philadelphia North American.

A New Year's Superstition.

The English peasantry in some localities had an odd superstition that it was unlucky to take anything out of the house until something had been brought in, so very early in the morning the wights would leap out of bed and rush forth, soon to return with pieces of coal or stone in their hands, hoping thereby to avert misfortune. Here is an old rhyme of warning: Take out, then take in, Bad luck will begin. Take in, then take out Good luck comes about.

A Warning.

Rhymes on the mistletoe Are all very well, y' know; But in mistletoe wason The promptings of reason Are toward the adagio; The gallant had better go slow, For kisses at times bring woe; To the doubting young Thomas May come breach of promise By way of the mistletoe!

What She Bought Him.

"No," said Mrs. Cusmo to Mrs. Cawker; "I know well enough not to buy cigars for my husband's Christmas present." "What did you get him?" "I bought him a razor—found it on the bargain counter and got it for ninety-eight cents."—Judge.

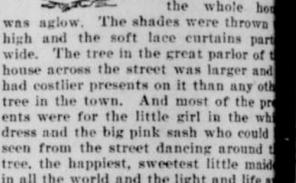
BROADACRE'S CHRISTMAS.

At Christmas play and make good cheer, For Christmas comes but once a year. -Old rhyme. CHRISTMAS e o m but once a year Well, gosh all the hooks who 'At has the Christmas bills to pay 'Id ask fer two Or three or four, any more 'an we have to-day? There may be some but say, by gum, ain't built that way.

I've got to git a sled for Ned and buy a d for Ned, And books and toys and lots of joys fer the crippled Dan, Fer he can't go about, you know, like other boys, and run. And that is why we all must try to help him have his fun. And 'Liza—how these girls come up—don't want dolls no more—She's got a beau—it can't be sol—a clerk, in a store; But after all, she's 'bout as tall as was her mother when We fell in love—we're in it yet—lots deep now than then. And so a year 'at didn't bring a Christmas seems to me. 'Ld be about the saddest thing a mortal could see. For who would miss the Christmas bills cause there's bills to pay? There may be some, but say, by gum! ain't built that way. -Nixon Waterman.

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