



IN ICELAND
by Stuart Macdon

There's going to be a railroad up in Iceland.
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.

You won't need your thermometers in Iceland.
In Iceland,
And you won't have any fretful vis a vis:
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 o'er the sea.
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," pitiously, "don't you think she is better?"

Dr. Lemoine 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 swaying 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

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.

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,

The Week Before.

'Tis the week before Christmas, and all through the place
Each woman goes shopping, with worn, weary face,
And held in her hand is a long, fearsome list
Of names that could simply by no means be missed—
So shopping, and shopping, and shopping they go
Bumped, shoved, pushed, and lugged in squad and in row.

'Tis the week before Christmas, and father is sad
Though mother and sisters are all of them glad.
Poor father reflects on the state of his wealth
And broods on expenses that tell on his health—
But once in the year come the glad Christmas days!
The rest of the year's for-poor father to pay.

'Tis the week before Christmas—and now the coy girl
Puts on her glad garments, adjusts her cute curl
And sends for the lover with whom she has cooed,
To tell him she knows he's the one she should trust,
And he—she forgives her. The gas is turned low—
And—this is the week before Christmas, you know.

'Tis the week before Christmas, and a through the home
The children are watched as they aimlessly roam,
And when they approach any wardrobe or chest
They are told they must stop—and o—the best!
And o, the sweet children! So fast are they
At Sunday school—Santa will come Christmas Day.

'Tis the week before Christmas, and all through the land

CHRISTMAS BELLS.

Ring out in joy, O chiming bells!
For in your melody there dwells
The music glad of Christmas-tide,
An every heart's desire, far and wide,
And rosy lips, with laughter sweet,
The happy songs of life repeat—
Ring out in joy!

Ring out in hope, O chiming bells!
For your clear notes of patience tell
To waiting hearts who promise fields
No golden fruit of harvest fields,
Whose garnered grain of falling hand
Lies heaped upon a barren land—
Ring out in hope!

Ring out in cheer, O chiming bells!
For in your peals a promise dwells
To listening hearts that strive to hear
The future's 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 heavily 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.



Fort Fisher
1864

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 wailing shriek 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 hurled at the sports 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 sloping 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 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 with 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.

She Knew.

Sunday School Teacher (illustrating the workings of conscience)—What is it, children, that makes you feel uncomfortable when you have eaten all your Christmas candy and not given any of it to your little friends who had none of their own? Little Ethel Beenthere—Tumach-ache, ma'am.—Judge.

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'm takin' fob my tex'.
What is a Christmas tree one day
Le kinidin' wood de ser'.
—Washington Star.

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 unto 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.

ST. LUKE II, 8-20

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, thou'rt gathering up the tangled, broken threads of these two lives, 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

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 darkies 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 flax 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 the colored folks happy. At some of these gatherings 300 persons take part, the old, spacious mansion giving ample room for all.

Pump Pudding.

One pound of grated bread, one and a quarter pounds of grated suet, one pound of raisins, one pound of brown sugar, twelve eggs, well beaten; two wineglasses of brandy, one-quarter pound of citron, cut fine. Mix all these the night before. In the morning before putting it in the cloth stir two tablespoonfuls of wheat flour, beat the cloth and sprinkle with flour. The tightly and boil four hours. Put a plate turned on the under part in the pot under the pudding; add cinnamon and nutmeg if liked.

Easy to Be Happy.

Mrs. Nextdoor—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.

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!
—Towa Toica.

Blow the trumpet, beat the drum,
Glad am I that Santa's come!

For that Dandruff

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Fifteenth Century Manners.

The antiquary took down a small, fat volume, vellum-bound, with a brass clasp.

"This is a 'Book of Manners,'" he said. "It was printed in 1470. Here are a few extracts."
And he read:
"Do not gnaw a bone, like a dog, nor suck the marrow out of a bone."
"In peeling a pear, begin at the stalk; but with an apple, begin at the top."
"Do not wipe the hands on the clothes, nor suck them, but use the cloth."

"When you drink, lift the cup in both hands; you must not drink with one hand like a wagoner when he is greasing his cart wheels."
"Wipe your nose and mouth when you have drunk, and do not cough into the cup."
"Do not eat an apple all alone, but cut it in two and give a neighbor a piece."
"Do not use your own knife to cut your meat if the host has set a knife of his own at your place."
"Do not spread butter on bread with your thumb."

Hotel in Mexico.

After answering the telephone and talking Spanish into it without apparently getting results, the clerk at a hotel hung up the receiver and remarked:

"My Spanish isn't the best in the world, I know, but I should think a man would know how to talk at least. The fellow just talking to me over the phone couldn't talk enough Spanish to order a meal, and to save me I couldn't make him understand, although I know I used correct language. While he was talking an American rushed into the hotel and up to the desk. "Say," he said, "can't anyone here talk English. I just tried to telephone here and the idiot trying to talk Spanish over the phone knows mighty little about the language."

"I was talking to you," said the clerk.

When apologies were made the conversation continued in English.—Mexican Herald.

Truistic Ahead.

"I see that Vienna sausages must be canned in Vienna and French sardines in France."
"Yes, but there's going to be trouble when they insist that Turkish cigarettes must be made in Turkey."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Each of Germany's eight colonies, except Samoa, receives a subsidy greater than the revenue it yields.

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